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THE JUNIOR DEAN

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A FELLOW OF TRINITY.

BY

ALAN ST. AUBYN,

AUTHOR OF 'THE JUNIOR DEAN.'

'To say that this book is fascinating would be but poor praise. It is a drama of real life, in which every person, and his every speech and action, is palpitating with intense and real life.'—*Whitehall Review*.

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LONDON: CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY.

THE JUNIOR DEAN

A Novel

BY ALAN ST. AUBYN

AUTHOR OF 'A FELLOW OF TRINITY'



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1891

' If there were dreams to sell
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy?'

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THE JUNIOR DEAN

CHAPTER XIII.

A WOMAN'S VICTORY.

‘Deep indeed
Their debt of thanks to her who first had dared
To leap the rotten pales of prejudice.’

THE galleries of the Senate House had never been so full of women before. The students of Girton and Newnham crowded into the Senate House and filled every available corner of the galleries long before nine o'clock on that fateful morning when the list of the Mathematical Tripos was read out.

Late-comers, who could only reach the out-

side edge of the crowd, climbed up into the windows and maintained their uncertain footing in a manner that was nothing short of miraculous.

The floor of the Senate House was filled with men, who looked up in a half-hearted sort of way at the women in the galleries. There was a general impression that the competition had been keen, and that the women had the best of it.

There was the usual amount of impatience ; and a strained, eager, anxious look on the sea of upturned faces that greeted the examiners when they appeared in a space cleared for them in front of the gallery.

But the anxiety of the men below was nothing to the intense eagerness of the women above. Miss Godolphin, with her tall striking figure thrown out in relief against the white wall of the Senate House, stood on a seat to get a better view of the bland little man

who smilingly read out the lists. Nobody could hear very much, for the men below made such a deafening noise. The girls' faces fell, and they looked blankly at each other when the name of the Senior Wrangler was read out. And then they ceased to listen; they had no interest in the men's names, their turn would come presently.

The University is not gallant—it places the men first, and then it does not even place the women distinctly and clearly in their order of merit, but weakly and ungraciously classes them between *consecutive* numbers of male candidates, or *equal* to certain numbers. It allows them no distinct and independent existence.

And all this time, while the men were shouting below and the girls were fuming above, Dorothy Piggott was sitting alone in a room at the back of the Senate House. It was a room that women seldom entered, and

it was not a cheerful room. The June sunshine stole in with a chastened brightness, but it couldn't make the room cheerful, and here Dorothy Piggott sat and awaited the issue.

She hadn't the courage to go out among the crowd like the rest, and hear the list read out. She had a horrible impression that she had failed.

Molly Gray was in the gallery, in the front row, listening with all her ears, scarcely allowing herself to breathe, indeed, when the fateful moment came.

The coolness of that bland little examiner, reading the list with all that hungry, breathless crowd hanging upon his lips, was provoking, to say the least of it. He had done with the men. Many flushed faces in the crowd below had whitened while he read out name after name with that slow deliberation that was so tantalizing, and many

white faces had flushed. It was over now. Success or failure was assured; there was no more uncertainty; the fiat had gone forth.

Still the men did not go away.

There was a momentary hush, and the mute agony of suspense on the white faces of the girls in the gallery was quite terrible. They could not bear the strain much longer.

Amid a breathless silence the smiling examiner—oh, how the girls hated him!—unfolded the crisp white paper—the rustle could be distinctly heard—and arranged his glasses.

‘Women!’

‘Ladies,’ corrected a chivalrous undergraduate, and insisted on the removal of hats.

There was a hoarse, dull roar from the crowd below, succeeded by a silence that could be felt.

If eyes could have devoured a man, there

wouldn't have been an atom of the little examiner left.

Nobody dared to breathe; every sense was merged in one. The tension was too great to last. The moment was supreme.

‘Bracketed—Second Wrangler—Dorothy Piggótt.’

The women gasped, the crowd below reeled—or seemed to reel—and a great hoarse shout went up, gathering volume until it merged into a roar. And then came the wild bursts of applause and enthusiasm from the galleries.

The women of Newnham and Girton were beside themselves. They beat their hands together and cheered till the Senate House rang with the unaccustomed girlish cheers.

Bracketed, Second Wrangler!

No wonder their enthusiasm knew no bounds.

And all the time the object of this wild

ovation sat trembling and cast down in that dismal back-room.

Miss Godolphin was beside herself. She clapped her hands and cheered, and led again and again the willing cheers ; when, suddenly remembering that Dorothy Piggott knew nothing of her great success, she looked around for someone to tell her. Her eye fell upon Molly, who stood flushed and trembling, beating her palms upon the gallery rail.

‘ You go,’ she said, almost pushing her through the crowd ; ‘ you go and bring her here. She would like to hear it best from you.’

Molly needed no second bidding. The crowd parted on either side to make way for her. Everyone knew her errand. Oh, such a glad errand !

Miss Piggott looked up when she entered : she had heard the cheers, and her courage

had failed her. Molly's courage failed, too ; and she stood before her with her hands clasped, and the words trembling on her lips.

‘ Oh, you dear !’ she said, throwing herself on her knees before her and hiding her face in her lap ; ‘ how shall I tell you ?’

‘ Have I—failed ?’ Dorothy Piggott gasped ; and all the colour left her face.

‘ Oh no—*no* ! not *that* ! Oh, how shall I tell you ?’

‘ You don’t mean——’ she stammered, looking straight into Molly’s eyes and reading the answer there.

‘ Yes, I do !’

There was no other explanation. Molly hadn’t got any words, but her eyes spoke as plain as eyes could speak. They were more eloquent than words ; and all the time the men were shouting outside, and a name reached her that seemed strangely unfamiliar, though

she had answered to it all her life—‘Dorothy Piggott!’

She threw her arms around Molly’s neck, and would have burst into tears, but somebody was wringing her hand and congratulating her on her great success — her wonderful success !

She heard the silvery voice of the Vice-Chancellor congratulating her in the most graceful and delightful terms. Her eyes were so full of tears that she could scarcely see him, and the kind faces that crowded round her.

She never knew exactly how it was that she found herself on the floor of the Senate House, with the crowd pressing round, and the men cheering, and everybody wringing her hand, and a great sea of faces piled and heaped up before her. She was surprised to see how shining they were, and that they all swam before her eyes like faces in a moving glass.

She saw nothing distinctly ; she passed through the crowd, who were all praising her, clinging to Miss Godolphin's arm, and hanging her head like a malefactor.

She saw only one face in that vast crowd. It was the face of a man who had come in late, who was strolling leisurely up the steps as she came down. It was Mr. Brackenbury, who had looked in to see if the lists of the General were stuck up on the Senate House doors.

He took off his cap, and all the men in the crowd below took off their caps and stood uncovered as she passed, rendering her all unconsciously the mute homage of royalty.

Oh, it was a great success !

It was not only great, but it was well earned—splendidly earned !

Rumour, which has always something of truth in it, had been busy as usual, and had counted up all Miss Piggott's marks, and all

the Senior Wrangler's marks, and it had found out—never mind what it found out.

He took all the glory and the distinction—no, not quite all, for when he came forward to take his degree, and knelt before the Vice-Chancellor, there was a cry raised in the Senate House :

‘Miss Piggott ! Miss Piggott !’

She had the honour of being bracketed with the man below him. The University had no other gift to bestow—not even a couple of yards of ribbon for her button-hole.

The students of Newnham celebrated the victory in a most unusual way.

They had a bonfire.

Every girl contributed something towards the blaze. It did not consist of candle-ends and fire-lighters, like a college bonfire. Latin hexameters and Greek iambs fed the flames. A great amount of feminine literature and old exercise-books was consumed. Every waste-

paper basket in Newnham was poured out as a libation upon the grass, and round and round the blazing pile the girls danced, and leaped, and cheered till they could cheer no more.

And then, with the light of the fire shining on all their happy faces, they gathered beneath her window, and gave her one last ringing cheer, and presently someone began to sing the men's boating chorus.

They all took it up, with a heartiness in their girlish voices that was unmistakable :

‘ For she’s a jolly good fellow !
For she’s a jolly good fellow !
For she’s a jolly good fellow !
And so say all of us !’

The girls hadn’t it all to themselves ; some undergraduates who had stolen in and were lurking on the confines of the grass, unobserved spectators of the scene, joined in the chorus :

‘ And so say all of us !’

There was a dance after in the college hall, but the daring undergraduates did not penetrate here. They had no part in these holy mysteries. The girls danced with each other, according to their custom—

‘Untainted by the arm of man
Was Sarah-Jane with Betsy-Ann.’

At least, that is what the undergraduates said who were peeping in at the windows.

Of course it was a base libel ; nobody is called Sarah-Jane at Newnham.

It was a delightful dance, and the men standing out there in the summer dusk were only envious because they were not dancing too. Once, when there was a lull, they were so daring, and took such unwarrantable advantage of the liberty accorded them, that they cried, ‘Speech, speech !’ as though they were in a theatre, and the girls said : ‘Hush, hush !’ because strangers must not make their presence known.

It was a maddening week, and the undergraduates might be pardoned for plunging into all sorts of excesses. There were the boat-races and the bump suppers ; the balls, the college concerts ; the boat procession, where the crews screamed themselves hoarse. There was feasting and fiddling, dancing and flirting, going on in every college hall, and a perfect saturnalia up every college staircase.

There was a great deal too much champagne drunk, and it would have been better perhaps to have substituted lemonade for claret-cup, but bump suppers—*the* supper that celebrates one's own particular bump—only come once in a lifetime.

But this is no reason for turning it into an orgy ; they will manage these things better by-and-by. There will be zoedone and temperance cups, and there will be no headaches the following morning.

There were a great many headaches at St.

Stephen's after the bump supper : they made two bumps, after all.

Jack looked dreadfully pale, Molly thought, when she saw him in the boat procession the next day with his hat trimmed up with flowers. He didn't look at all happy as he sat in his flower-crowned boat. He was thinking of that horrible bill, and how he was to meet it. The excitement was all over now, and he was going home the next day to meet the old governor. He was thinking of the Rector, and how he should break it to him about that bill, while the men were singing 'Auld Lang Syne' and shouting as only Cambridge undergraduates can shout.

He felt more wretched, if possible, the next day, when he went down with the girls. He travelled with them for economy. With that bill on his mind, he felt he must give up the week in London that he had promised himself all the term. Mr. Brackenbury had offered

to share his rooms with him—he happened to be flush of money just now, a most unusual thing with him at the end of a term. He generally had to borrow the amount of his fare down.

Jack refused his offer, and went back to his home in the West Country in the sweet June weather, with his charming sisters, in about as unanniable a mood as it was possible to travel in. He let the girls take the tickets, look after the luggage, carry the wraps, the umbrellas, and the tennis racquets ; bribe the porters, pay the cabman, and scramble for the carriages; and when Molly remonstrated he took himself off to a smoking carriage, and they saw no more of him for the rest of the journey.

The lists were not all out when they left Cambridge. Molly had gone boldly up to the doors of the Senate House just before she left, and read down the names on a new list

that had just been stuck up. It was the General Examination list, and Mr. Brackenbury's name did not appear in it. He met her coming down the steps after she had read it, and he didn't want to see the list after that meeting. He read the verdict of the examiners in her tell-tale eyes. She couldn't keep it out of her eyes.

She was as glad that he was ploughed as if she had passed the Little-go with honours.

There had been only one list published yet of the results of the Previous, and in that list Molly's name did not appear. They had stuck Dorothy Piggott's name on the doors of the Senate House, and telegraphed it all over the world ; but they hadn't found a corner for Molly's, not in the second class, or the third class, or even the fourth class. They had left her out in the cold altogether. However, there was another list yet to come, and she had done well in that Greek grammar paper.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

‘ And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.’

THEY were home again in the West Country in the sweet blue June weather. The dog-cart and the old gray pony were waiting for them at the junction two miles off. It pricked up its ears and neighed when it heard the familiar voices on the platform, and rubbed its slobbery old mouth all over Molly's jacket in the exuberance of its welcome.

‘ When you have quite finished kissing old Merrylegs we'll start,’ said Jack impatiently.

‘He’s quite spoilt your new jacket, Molly, and it serves you right. I’ve no patience with fondling animals in that absurd manner,’ said Adela, taking advantage of Molly’s occupation to secure the front seat in the dog-cart.

It was a delightful ride home in the moonlight. It was quite worth going away for the pleasure of coming home again. Molly knew every tree and bush on the way, and she nodded to them, as if they had been old friends. How big the hills looked, after the flat, monotonous country round Cambridge! How delicious were the dusky lanes between the high green hedgerows, with the foxglove growing tall, and the sweet scent of the honeysuckle, and the petals of the June roses falling like summer snow upon their path! Molly had seen it all a thousand times before, but she never felt until to-night, as she was jolted up and down on the back seat of the

dog-cart, how dear it was to her. She had lived in this sweet, green country all her life ; she had wandered in these familiar lanes as long as she could remember, but until to-night they had never stirred any emotion in her.

The sight of these dear, familiar things brought a rush of happy tears to her eyes. They were still wet when the dog-cart drove in at the Rectory gate. The Rector was already on the steps waiting to receive them. He didn't tell them that he had been out a dozen times before, listening for the sound of wheels. He embraced the girls with paternal warmth, but all the enthusiasm of his welcome was reserved for Jack.

‘ My dear boy ! Oh, my dear boy ! ’

He shook both his hands ; he patted him on the back ; he turned him round to the light with his hands on his shoulders, to have a good look at him.

‘You’re looking pale, Jack, my boy ; you’ve been working too hard,’ he said, looking at him with fond paternal pride. ‘We must feed him up, Madge ; this training and working has taken all the flesh off his bones. It was quite time for him to come home !’

No prodigal could have had a warmer reception. He had wasted his term ; he had spent all his substance in riotous living ; he had disappointed every expectation of his fond old father ; he had signed a three months’ bill for three hundred pounds when he hadn’t three hundred pence to meet it with ; and here he was received with open arms, and the old, old welcome, ‘Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it’ !

The prodigal hung his head : he had no appetite for the fatted calf. He’d rather his father hadn’t made such a fuss about him. The most humiliating thing of all was that

the old man put down his haggard looks and his gloomy ways to overwork. It brought the tears into his eyes, all this fond, foolish, unmerited kindness, and he would turn away with a groan, and look more gloomy and ashamed than ever.

But the Rector would not let Jack nurse his gloomy thoughts for long. He took him all over the place the next morning, and showed him all the improvements that had been made while he had been away. He took him round the yard to see all his old friends: the poultry and the pigeons, the tame jackdaw in the stables, old Merrylegs in the meadow, and the white sow that had just had a fine litter of young ones.

The Rector was very proud of his pigs.

‘Now, my boy,’ he said, clapping Jack on the shoulder, ‘here’s a sum worth doing! If I keep those seventeen young squeakers five weeks I can sell them to the butcher for

fifteen shillings apiece. Now tell me how much that'll amount to? That old lady helps to pay your college bills, Jack. Three litters a year at thirteen pounds a litter 'll make a nice little sum !

Jack hung his head and walked away. It would take the 'old lady' a long time to make up that wretched bill—something like a litter a week !

He was mentally calculating how many young squeakers it would take to make up that accursed sum, when he encountered Molly—Molly, with her hat swinging on her arm, and her apron full of flowers, and the rough old yard-dog trotting by her side. She was singing blithely ; who would not sing on a June morning when there wasn't a cloud in the sky, or a feather-weight of care in one's bosom, and the roses were in bloom, and the wedding-day was fixed ?

'Oh, I say, Molly,' the prodigal blurted

out, 'I've been making such a beast of myself! The governor fancies I've been working hard all the term, and—and I haven't opened a book; I haven't attended a lecture. I didn't go in for any of the college Mays—I should have done no good if I had. I have done nothing all the term; and I have run confoundedly into debt!'

'Oh, Jack!' and Molly's lip quivered and fell; 'how will you tell him?'

'I don't think I shall tell him at all,' said Jack moodily. 'When it comes to telling, you'll have to break it to him.'

'I? Oh, Jack, he'll bear it ever so much better from you! He'll forgive you anything. You don't know—you'll never know—how he's wrapped up in you.'

'That's just it,' said Jack, with a groan; and he passed his sleeve across his eyes and went out into the road, and banged the Rectory gate to after him.

It was a dismal vacation for the girls. Jack, who used to be the life of the house, went moping about the place moody and melancholy, taking no interest in any of his old pursuits, and shunning his old friends when they would have invited him to their houses and made much of him. Cambridge undergraduates were at a premium in Silver-ton, where there were so many girls, and only one among them all engaged.

He played lawn-tennis in his college blazer, looking as moody and careworn as if he were going up for an exam., instead of enjoying a well-earned holiday. He sulked about the grounds all day, and dropped into the village ale-house of a night. There was no company at home for him but the old man and the girls. That fond, foolish pride and affection of the old man cut him to the quick. He was so proud of him, and bragged about him to all his friends at the clerical meetings. He never

lost an opportunity of telling his neighbours what great things Jack was going to do. He boasted everywhere of his boy's great talents, and his splendid success, and of the brilliant degree he was going to take.

He had done well at the University himself; but his boy was going to do much better—oh, so much better !

Jack couldn't stand it. It was like pouring out coals of fire upon his head.

The Rector unconsciously added a hotter coal than all the rest one day when he and Jack were walking through the meadows.

The hay had just been carried, and it had been a busy week for all the household. Everybody had been hay-making. The Rector himself had worked in the fields all day like a horse; he had worked himself to the verge of apoplexy. Even Jack, when he saw him as red as a peony and mopping himself in the broiling sun, remonstrated.

He didn't offer to take the fork himself; he only told the governor he'd better come in.

'No, no, Jack, my boy,' said the Rector cheerily. 'Make hay while the sun shines. This is the college rick; thank God it's a splendid shear!'

It was a capital shear—the heaviest shear that had been carried for many a year, and it was well saved. Not a drop of rain fell all the time it lay upon the ground. It was the brownest, sweetest, wholesomest rick of hay in the parish, and the largest. The farmers who had cut their grass a week earlier or a week later, and just caught a few unexpected showers and a thunder-storm, shook their heads as they drove past the rick, and watched the thatcher neatly covering it in.

'Ay, trust the parson,' they said; 'what wi' his tithes, and what wi' his glebe, he takes all the cream out o' the parish.'

It was a noble rick, and the Rector pointed to it with pride, as he walked through the fields where the aftermath was already springing.

‘There, Jack!’ he said, ‘that rick and the old lady will just pay your college bills. It used to pay your schooling at Blundell’s; it’s bigger now than ever it was. It has grown with the need. It is like the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil. Thank God, it has never failed yet! And here is the new grass for another crop springing already! We never thank God half enough for His mercies. They are waiting for us—new every morning—just as if He had never given us anything before! He sends the manna; we only gather it.’

Jack often looked at the college rick during that dreary long vacation, and wondered how far it would go towards paying that wretched bill.

Mr. Brackenbury wrote to him a few days

before it became due and offered in the most handsome way to get it renewed.

‘I don’t suppose, old fellow,’ he wrote, ‘that you are any more prepared than I am to take it up. I dropped fifty at Ascot, and I’ve had an awful run of ill-luck at cards. I’ll get old Beelzebub to renew it, and tack on the interest, and meanwhile something may turn up.’

So the bill was renewed, and the interest tacked on, and Jack’s mind relieved for the present. He never thought to ask what the interest would be. It never occurred to him that a running bill was like a snowball, and grew in the same proportion. It was quite bad enough and big enough before, and it was growing daily. It might have been possible once to have met it. The college rick would have been something towards it, and the ‘old lady’ would have done her part; and the Rector—naturally there would have been a

mauvais quart d'heure — would have come round and paid the rest.

But soon it would be beyond his power to meet it. He had no faith in anything turning up. Nobody was likely to leave him a fortune. He had never earned a penny in his life, and it would be years before he would earn anything like enough to pay for that wretched folly of an hour.

A thousand times he had been on the point of telling his father, and his courage had failed him. He doubted the love that was showering all its best gifts upon him—that had never failed him yet—that had never once given him a stone when he asked for bread. He forgot all the hithertos of blessing that had crowned his life, and he turned away from the dear generous counsellor, who had never failed him, to the wily bill-discounter who concealed his Jewish origin beneath the endearing pseudonym ‘A Friend.’

The girls enjoyed their vacation in their own way. Adela had a great deal of reading to do. She was never seen without a Greek book under her arm, or in her pocket, or open upon her lap. Molly declared that she always slept with one under her pillow.

Everyone to his taste—or, rather, her taste. Molly preferred the Junior Dean's letters under her pillow. She sometimes left them there, and then the housemaid read them. If she had a lover of her own, they would not be new to her.

The lovers' language has such a limited vocabulary. The sweet old-world story is told in precisely the same words now as it was told a thousand years ago.

The Junior Dean hadn't very much to tell her. He was doing duty in a little out-of-the-way watering-place in Wales. He had gone there expecting quiet, and he had been disappointed. The place was full of visitors—

Cockneys mostly, who had come there for a summer holiday. He had not found many friends there, and he had not found the quiet he sought; but he had found a voice. A quite wonderful voice!

His letters were full of the voice. It was such a help to him in the church. It led the choir, it sang at the village concerts, it taught in the Sunday-school.

Molly was quite indifferent to the voice, so long as it restricted itself to the church and the school-room; but when she heard that the beautiful voice had been singing his favourite hymns—her favourite hymns—to the Junior Dean after the service, she inquired in her next letter if the voice happened to be a woman's, and—and was it young?

Her lover was openness itself, and he wrote back immediately answering both questions.

It was not only a woman's voice, but it was

a prima donna's voice. It was young, and—and he supposed people would call the owner of it beautiful; but so far as he was concerned he judged all women by one standard of beauty, and—well, there is no need to say any more, though Molly's lover said a good deal more.

He didn't say much more about the voice after satisfying Molly's curiosity. He had other more interesting topics to discuss. He had saved a whole hundred pounds, and Molly should buy furniture with it for *that dear little house* directly she came back to Cambridge. She had always stipulated that she should choose every article of furniture herself—that every room should reflect her own æsthetic taste.

She began to study store lists, and upholsterers' lists during the vacation, so as to be prepared with prices and values.

She covered whole sheets of paper with

abstruse calculations, which Madge thought were arithmetical exercises for the mathematical part of the Little-go in which Molly had been so ignominiously plucked. She was 'through' in her classics, which was an immense comfort. No more Greek grammar —no more Latin verbs!

She had relieved her mind of a whole sackful, as she expressed it, and now there was nothing more to be done but to get through those horrid figures.

'I wouldn't trouble my head, dear, if I were you,' said Madge one day when she found Molly poring over a long sheet of figures, 'I really wouldn't bother my head with any more mathematics. They will never be the least good to you.'

'Yes, they will,' said Molly stoutly; 'they will help me to add up the butcher's book. I never could add up a column of figures before, and now look !' and she flourished the

long list of household requisites before her eyes.

‘I don’t think you want to go to Newnham to learn to do that,’ said Madge shortly. She wasn’t ill-natured; she would have liked to go to Newnham herself. She would have liked above all things a life of ease and culture; but she had to stay at home, and keep the house, and darn the Rector’s stockings.

The house could not have gone on a day without her.

‘No,’ said Molly, ‘perhaps not. But, you see, they are not the end. They are only the means—the most horrible means—to the end. Oh, if you only knew how I hate them! But one can’t pass the Little-go without them. One can’t take up any Tripos without them. They are a stumbling-block in the way of everything. Why, I have known men plucked three or four times in algebra: girls are seldom plucked more than once, and they

go up their first term ; and men are plucked ever so many times, and sometimes do not pass both parts of the Little-go till they've been up two or three years.'

Madge smiled, Molly was so very much in earnest.

'My dear,' she said, 'I am not reflecting upon you. I think it is quite wonderful that you have done what you have. I have seen the papers. Yes ; I have read every word, dear, and I can't think how you did it !

'You forget that Adela' did it easily. She passed with honours the first time,' said Molly with a sigh.

✓ 'Oh, Adela—that was quite different ! She is the genius of the family. She is going to do something great. I fancy she is going to marry a Professor. I have seen a likeness that she keeps upon her table when she is working. I have seen her looking at it sometimes as if it helped her. She generally

keeps it inside the cover of her Greek lexicon where nobody would be likely to look. She must be very fond of the original, or she wouldn't look at his photograph so often.'

'Has he got any hair?' asked Molly irrelevantly.

'Not very much, I think, dear. I haven't looked at it through a glass, but I don't think he has any in front. He has a fringe.'

'A fringe?'

'Yes—a very nice fringe. Behind, of course. But you must know him; you know all the people that Adela knows.'

'Oh yes, I know him quite well—I know him by his fringe. He is the Master of a college, and—and I do believe Adela is going to marry him!'

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEAUTIFUL VOICE.

‘So tender was her voice, so fair her face.’

LLANBERYS-BY-THE-SEA was a very disappointing place.

The Rev. Keith Fellowes had taken the sole charge of the parish for three months while the Vicar had gone away for a summer holiday. The Vicar knew very well what he was about when he advertised for a *locum tenens* at this particular time of the year.

At all other seasons Llanberys was lovely—a delightful rural little village set down, or rather grown up, in the midst of the hills, and with an endless stretch of yellow sands,

and a snug little blue bay, edged in with white cliffs that rivalled—in miniature—the Bay of Naples.

But in the ‘season’ it was quite a different thing. The ‘season’—that is, this particular three months—brought with it a constant flow, or rather overflow, of Cockney visitors, and the Vicar had chosen this time to go away.

He would come back when the Cockneys had all flown, and the place had returned to its pristine quiet.

Mr. Fellowes had known it years ago, when it was a little fishing-village, and there was no railroad near. He had lighted upon it in a walking tour, and had once spent a long vacation there with a reading party. There was not a single visitor in the place in those days beside the men of his party, and they enjoyed unbroken quiet.

But now things were changed. A railway company had found out Llanberys, and ran

cheap excursion-trains there all through the summer. A jerry-builder had also found it out, and run up terraces of lodging-houses and laid out a grand esplanade. An enterprising company had run out a frail, slender-legged pier into the sea. A limited-liability company had built a grand hotel ; the proprietor of a patent medicine had conceived a brilliant idea of advertising his nostrums, and covered the beach with hideous bathing-machines with 'a Horrible Pill' painted in big letters all over them.

The dear little old village church, where the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept, had been superseded, and a big, draughty, barn-like structure took its place.

It was very disappointing. Still, it could not be helped ; and it was only for three months.

Keith Fellowes reminded himself of this fact pretty often during that first week of surprise

and disillusion. There was also the consideration that he would receive fifty pounds for his three months' work here ; and he would save, at least, another fifty in his board and residence at the Vicarage. It was a clear gain of one hundred pounds. He would have spent quite fifty pounds had he gone abroad this long vacation ; and now he was earning instead of spending money.

He often thought of that hundred pounds, and what it would buy, as he walked on the yellow sands, past the bathing-machines, with the din of the brass band in his ears. It would have been endurable but for the brass band. It was a new experience to the Junior Dean, preaching to a mixed congregation in a popular watering-place. He had seldom preached except in his college chapel ; and the discourse that would be suitable there would be out of place here.

He was a little nervous the first Sunday,

and went home feeling that he had failed. The week-day services were failures, too. The church was nearly empty, and the service was lifeless.

The next Sunday matters were worse. There was a smaller congregation; and the people yawned in his face during the sermon—and some went out.

People never go out in a college chapel; and it disconcerted him.

He was disheartened and miserable; and he acknowledged to himself that he was out of touch with the people.

He didn't know a soul in the place; and nobody had called upon him—except the tradespeople for orders and the band for a subscription. There was nobody to call, indeed. There were no residents. He was much too shy to make himself known to the visitors; and he limped about the place, in among the merry throng, almost unnoticed.

The girls who played tennis looked after him, when they saw him limping about the beach—he always limped in an aggravated way if anyone noticed his infirmity—but he hadn't the courage to join them.

He was the only curate at Llanberys ; and, oh, how they would have welcomed him ! They wouldn't have minded his limp. They would have got up picnics and water-parties, and endless innocent dissipations for his especial benefit, if he had only mustered up the courage to go among them ; and this history of his weakness would have remained unwritten. He had been at Llanberys a fortnight, and he was conducting his second Wednesday evening service. The church was fuller than it had been the week before, for more visitors had arrived ; in fact, the place was crammed—the village, not the church ; and when he came to the *Magnificat* there was a dead silence.

The organ was dumb; the organist had not put in an appearance. There had been so few people at the last week-day service that, doubtless, he thought that his services could be dispensed with. Keith Fellowes looked round helplessly. Would nobody begin? He couldn't sing a note himself; and he could only play a psalm tune with one finger.

As he looked round at the congregation, with a dumb entreaty in his eyes, a voice came to the rescue—a voice that rose full and clear, not a dozen seats away from him. It was a clear, full contralto voice; and it filled the silent church. It went up to the roof; and it swelled through the aisles, and it thrilled through the lifeless congregation, and it went straight to the heart of the Junior Dean.

It went through the psalm unaided; and when it had finished, his heart was beating

in a most ridiculous way—as if he had never heard a woman sing in church before.

By-and-by he gave out a hymn. He wasn't at all sure that he ought to give out a hymn at a week-night service when there was no organist present. But he gave it out, nevertheless, and waited.

He hadn't to wait long ; clear and sweet as a silver clarion rose the voice. It sang the hymn right through, while the congregation listened breathless. It went straight to all hearts. It was as good as a sermon. It had ceased, and the people were going out of church before the Junior Dean recovered himself.

He got out of the desk, and took off his surplice, and limped down the aisle in his cassock to the spot where the voice had proceeded from. The little congregation were nearly all out of church, but one lady was still on her knees.

The twilight was rapidly falling, and the body of the church was in gloom; but Keith Fellowes thought he had spotted the voice correctly.

‘Oh, I beg your pardon!’ he began nervously, when the lady rose up from her knees; ‘but I wanted to thank you for the help you have given me in the singing.’

‘Oh no; not at all. I am so glad to have been of use. I did not know I was helping you: I cannot help singing.’

There was no mistake; the speaking voice was sweeter and softer than the singing voice. It was so soft it was like velvet, and the sweetness was cloying. Keith Fellowes thought it was the sweetest voice he had ever heard.

It was just light enough to see that the owner of the voice was young, and that she had quite a wealth of light hair, which she wore done up in a big knot behind, under her

veil — she wore a veil — and that she was richly dressed.

Keith Fellowes was sure of this ; for he heard the rustle of her silk skirt trailing on the floor of the church as she went out.

It was a *frou-frou* rustle that he was not accustomed to. Molly wore short skirts, and they were generally limp ; they never rustled — and the owner of the voice left behind her in the darkening church a faint sweet odour that the foolish fellow sniffed up as if it had been incense.

He went home, and dreamed of the voice. He couldn't dream of the owner, because he hadn't seen her face. He managed to mix up her back hair, and the *frou-frou* of her trailing gown, and the subtle odour that he sniffed up in the aisle, in a pretty confusion that he would have blushed dreadfully to own.

He went out after breakfast for his morning walk on the beach, and took the *Guardian*

with him to assist his meditations. He limped in and out among the bathing-machines in his accustomed absent-minded way, getting mixed up with the horses, and standing right in the way of the dripping damsels returning from the moist embrace of the waves. He wouldn't have owned to himself for the world that he was looking for anybody; but he certainly looked at the girls who were going into the water or coming out of the water with more interest than he had shown hitherto. He had looked at every girl with light hair on the beach—he had occasion to look at a great many—and was returning along the esplanade, looking for an empty seat now, when he encountered the object of his search.

She wasn't in a tight-fitting bathing-gown, with the water dripping off her shining limbs; but she wore a very becoming morning-dress that displayed her figure quite as well. Keith

Fellowes could not be mistaken. He knew her at once by the golden glint of that wonderful knot of hair that was gathered up under her big sun-hat, and the subtle odour that hung around her.

He couldn't have told for the world what it was. It might be frangipanni, wood-violet, ess. bouquet, millefleurs, or any other scent ; but he couldn't mistake it. He would know it among a thousand.

She was coming towards him, and he flushed up ridiculously, like a girl. The lady bowed slightly—very slightly ; and he took off his hat, and, instead of bowing in a bland, patronizing, clerical way, he turned as red as a peony. She passed on, and he hoped she hadn't noticed his awkwardness. Fortunately there was an empty space on one of the seats of the esplanade ; and he sat down and covered up his confusion with the *Guardian*.

Was this the voice ?'

He looked over the top of the *Guardian* and saw the yellow hair, and the dainty figure, and the pose and the carriage of the graceful head—he had never seen a woman with such a carriage in his life. He watched her to the end of the esplanade, and then he turned hurriedly to his paper and found he was reading it upside down.

Other people looked after the voice, and some smiled and whispered. When he looked up again, she was coming back. He would have to bow to her again when she passed if he sat there. He might hide himself behind the *Guardian*; but with all those people looking on, and smiling and whispering, he couldn't trust himself, and he got up hurriedly and went away.

It is always a safe thing to do—to run away.

If St. Anthony had run away instead of dallying with the temptation, the story of his

fall would not have been a warning to all subsequent generations. Like St. Anthony, the Junior Dean had got his Book before him when the temptation next assailed him.

He was reading the morning service, and he looked nervously down through the crowded church, when the organ struck up. He couldn't see her among all the millinery and fashion of a holiday crowd, but he could hear the voice. It drowned all the other voices ; it extinguished the little surpliced choir ; it seemed to be singing alone. Clear as a bell, and sweet—oh, so sweet !

It made the Junior Dean's heart stand still. Oh, if Molly had only a voice like it !

He thought of nothing else but the voice all through the following week. He met it at every turn on the esplanade ; he ran across it among the bathing-machines, where he had a knack of getting himself mixed up ; he saw it reclining gracefully upon the beach ; he

found it nestling among the rocks. It was always beautiful ; it was always graceful ; it was always well dressed ; and it was generally alone.

The Junior Dean didn't run away now when he saw it : he walked beside it sometimes ; he found it very nice to talk to ; gentle and soft and confiding—very confiding ; and—and unutterably sweet. Oh, it was a delightful voice !

He sat down and wrote to Molly, after one of these talks by the sea—among the rocks—and told her all about it. He had found out, after that first Sunday, that the owner of the beautiful voice was an actress from London ; the prima donna of some London theatre—he didn't know which ; he knew very little about theatres—and he didn't call her an actress : he called her a singer—a singer with a lovely name.

Rose De l'Orme—Mdlle. Rose De l'Orme.

He often repeated the name softly to himself ; it was a delightful name !

The week-day services were crowded now ; and at the Sunday services the congregation overflowed into the porch. He was dimly conscious that the people didn't come to hear him—that they came to hear the voice. There was a village concert on behalf of the schools, and the prima donna offered to sing ; and when the night came, there was such a crush for admission that half the people had to be turned away, and the performance was repeated the second night.

She had rendered such valuable aid to the parish that the day after the concert, when the accounts had been made up, and the satisfactory result announced, he called to thank her for her generous aid.

He had never called before ; and he was dreadfully nervous.

Mdlle. De l'Orme had rooms at one of the

best lodging-houses in the place. It was quite full of lodgers, and she had the best set of apartments ; and — and she had no *chaperon*.

Perhaps prima donnas do not need *chaperons*.

She might have been expecting him, for she was arrayed in a lovely tea-gown, and was reclining in a most graceful attitude when he entered ; and the light through the pale rose-coloured curtains was becomingly shaded. It was like a scene in a play ; only the Junior Dean didn't go to the play, so that he didn't remark the resemblance.

He drew comparisons instead.

Molly never reclined in graceful attitudes — she was much too energetic to recline at all. And she never wore tea-gowns ; dainty creations all lace — cascades of lace — and ribbons and clinging folds, and trailing yards upon the ground. She usually wore her

frocks very short, with often a button or two missing. Lectures are so *exigeant* at Newnham that one hasn't time for buttons.

He never knew how lovely the prima donna was until he saw her in the soft rose light of that shaded room. Her beauty quite took away his breath. It matched her voice. It was the loveliest woman's face he had ever beheld—at least, in that carefully shaded room.

The roses on her cheeks were quite unlike Molly's. They were not so diffused, extending sometimes to her chin and the tip of her nose; and they were of a different hue—totally different.

They were lovely stationary roses, of the richest damask; they didn't come and go in that provoking way like those on Molly's April cheeks.

And, oh, her complexion!

The arum-lily was the nearest comparison the Junior Dean could make, as he sat sipping

a cup of tea, which this divinity had poured out for him. It wasn't at all a transparent complexion, like somebody else's. It was perfectly opaque, and waxen, and white. Though the beautiful fluffy hair was golden—oh, so golden! Midas might have swept his fingers over it—the level brows and the long sweeping eyelashes were dark, and there were dark heavy shadows beneath the beautiful eyes.

There was no gainsaying it; they were beautiful eyes: large and oval, and deep and pensive, and soft as a gazelle's. That was the charm of them; they were a trifle heavy and languishing—but, oh, so soft!

Now, Molly's eyes were not at all soft; they were not only bright, but they were as sharp and keen as a pair of electric lights.

'I have called to thank you,' the Junior Dean began awkwardly, sitting down in a ridiculously low chair, with his legs stuck out before him—'I have called to thank you for

the valuable help you have given us. The churchwardens have begged me to tender you their acknowledgments ; and for myself I am most grateful. You have enabled us to pay off the debt on the schools.'

This was a long speech, and the Junior Dean stammered over it in a most absurd way.

'Oh, please don't—please *don't*!' said the prima donna, with her very best smile ; and raising her white hands with a deprecating gesture—the attitude was very pretty, and showed off her arms under the loose sleeves of the tea-gown ; and the rings on her fingers—'I am so glad to be of any use. I lead such a useless life that it is quite a privilege to do any good in the world.'

Mdlle. De l'Orme sighed, and looked down at her rings. It was a very taking sigh ; she had often practised it before a larger audience.

'Yes,' said the Junior Dean ; 'it is a great privilege ;' and then he sighed too.

Sighs are catching; but perhaps he was thinking of Molly. She had never thought it a privilege to do good : she hated visiting, as she had told him in the frankest manner ; and if there was one thing more than another that she could not bring her soul to, it was Sunday-school teaching.

‘Oh, you happy people,’ murmured the prima donna softly, still looking down at her rings, ‘who have nothing to do but good works ; who live in a pure atmosphere ; who are strong and self-sufficient, and are not tempted and tried like other men : what can you know of a life like mine ?’

What, indeed !

She looked very interesting with her down-cast eyes and her pensive attitude ; she was the most charming penitent that the Junior Dean had ever seen.

‘Every lot has its special temptations,’ he said softly—he had caught her tone ; ‘I

am tempted and tried daily, often above measure.'

'You! you, Mr. Fellowes? I should have thought, with your austere life' (how did she know he led an austere life?), 'that the enemy had no power over you.'

Keith Fellowes shook his head sadly. 'There is a thorn in the flesh for every man, and I am not exempt from the common lot. The enemy knows exactly where I am weak, and—and he attacks me there.'

Mdlle. De l'Orme looked up with a sudden interest in her lovely eyes — if she had only the omniscience of the enemy! 'I thought all men in the Church were strong,' she said softly, still watching him. 'They are our spiritual directors; they ought to be strong, above all human weakness, above temptation. Oh, they ought to be *very* strong to listen to all our sad, shameful stories!'

'Men are only human,' he said gravely,

‘even at the best. There cannot be the continual struggle, and defeat, and shame in a woman’s life that there is in a man’s. A woman’s instincts are nobler and purer.’

He was thinking of that high standard by which he judged all women, and he looked above the drooping golden head with that becoming coil that might have been of twisted gold.

‘Oh, you don’t know! you don’t know!’ said Mdlle. Rose, covering her face with her hands, and her bosom heaving with emotion.

The Junior Dean looked on perplexed and strangely moved. The situation was becoming embarrassing.

‘You have only met women of your own class—happy women who have no temptations. It is so easy for those who have homes and friends to be good and pure, and live noble lives. It is so easy to be good when there is no temptation to be bad.’

‘No temptation can happen to man or woman, but with it there is given a way of escape,’ said the Junior Dean gravely.

‘Oh, you don’t know!’ said Mdlle. Rose, in a very sad voice, and her eyes filled with tears—they didn’t run over. ‘You don’t know the temptations of such a life as mine, and—and—there is no way out.’

‘There is always a way,’ said the Junior Dean earnestly, ‘if—if you seek for it. Do you seek for it with all your heart?’

‘I’m afraid I don’t. I am a poor, vain, frivolous worldling. I have never known any good people. I never knew how empty and hollow my life was until I met you ;’ and then she discreetly wiped away the two tears that had gathered on her long eyelashes before they fell.

‘If I can be any use to you, if I can lend you any books, or advise you in any way, I shall be very glad,’ said the Junior Dean.

‘Oh, if you would only come and see me sometimes, Mr. Fellowes ! It always does me good to talk to you. And—and any books you will lend me I will gladly read.’

So the Junior Dean promised to lend her some books, and to come in sometimes to see her ; and he went away with a heightened colour, and his heart full of pity for this lovely creature who had just found out that her life was hollow and empty.

She did not rise from her drooping attitude till the front door of the lodging-house closed upon him ; then she rose up from her low seat, and gave a delightful little laugh, and went over to the piano and sang a very naughty little French song, which seemed to relieve her feelings immensely.

The Junior Dean sent her the books he promised. He took the trouble to mark a great many passages in them that he thought would

suit her condition. They were very nice books ; but they were by no means new, and the bindings were worn and shabby. He also was thoughtful enough to put in a tract or two.

Rosey — for Mdlle. Rose De l'Orme was our old friend Rosey — made a little *moue* when she opened the packet. She looked hurriedly for a letter or some scrap of writing, but there was no letter enclosed. She opened the covers of the books and shook them out, but there wasn't a scrap of paper. Only the good books. She didn't attempt to read them ; she curled her hair with the tracts, so they were not wasted.

When she went to church the following day she had an airy, fairy, dainty arrangement of golden curls over her low white brow. The Junior Dean saw it from the pulpit when he gave out the hymn, and he very nearly gave out the wrong one. He thought it

was Nature's handiwork; he had no idea it was the tracts.

He came upon Rosey the next day reclining upon the beach—she didn't sprawl like some girls, she reclined in the most delightful attitude. The fringe was still in curl, and she was reading. She was so intent upon the book before her that she did not see him; but he recognised the book—it was a very worn one—and he could not resist the temptation of sitting down beside her and talking about it.

Had she read the marked passage?

Of course she had read every one; at least, she said so. It was a delightful book; it had been a great comfort to her!

It had been a comfort to her exactly two minutes!

Rosey had seen him coming a long way off, and she had discreetly slipped a yellow-covered French novel she was reading under

her skirt, and substituted the little good book which she had ready in her pocket.

She was in a very pleasing frame of mind ; she was ready—anxious—to be converted, and the Junior Dean felt he had not been sent to Llanberys in vain. She told him in their frequent walks and talks a good deal of her past history — of the trials and vicissitudes of her life : she said nothing about the Newmarket Road or Mrs. Pell. She told him exactly such facts as would throw a halo of romance around her naughty past, and she coloured it in her own artistic way.

She had lost her parents when a child ; she had been brought up by a worldly relative ; necessity had driven her to adopt the stage as a profession. The life was hateful to her ; she was sick of hollow applause, of the admiration of the vulgar crowd ! She yearned for friendship, for love

—for a true, tender friend who would stand between her and the world.

She didn't tell him this bluntly all at once, but with many pretty phrases, and with shy glances of her dove-like eyes ; and her bosom heaved a good deal during the recital, and she was a good deal agitated ; and sometimes she was so overcome that she was obliged to take the Junior Dean's arm.

This generally happened when they had separated themselves from the crowd, and had left the brass band and the hideous bathing-machines far behind, and were wandering alone beneath the white cliffs beside the sad sea waves.

Rosey was very fond of the sunset ; and they would loiter among the rocks and watch the red sun sink into the sea, and the Junior Dean would repeat some suitable hymns. And they would walk slowly back to the town in the sweet dusky twilight, and

Rosey would cling to his arm, and sigh and yearn for a new life : a life of religion and love—she couldn't live without a little love—where there should be no theatres or concerts or music-halls, or any such worldly things—where she should spend her life in singing hymns and in ministering to the poor.

The picture touched the Junior Dean. This was exactly the life that he had desired for Molly, and she had turned up her nose at it. She didn't want to be always singing hymns, and she had no vocation for visiting.

Every time he walked home with Rosey the little rift of doubt in his mind widened. He wasn't at all sure that his betrothed was the right girl for a clergyman's wife. It was **not** the first time the doubt had assailed him. When he saw her from the Bridge of Sighs in a boat with Mr. Brackenbury, he had asked himself the same question.

She was a jolly girl—a very jolly girl ; but

she had no stability of character. Now, if she were only like this dear woman by his side, whose heart was beating so close beneath his arm—he could almost count the beats! Now, if Molly had only her earnestness, her yearning for good things!

He acknowledged to himself, with something like a groan, that Molly hadn't the least yearning for good things—that she was quite indifferent to them. She wasn't the least fitted for a clergyman's wife. A jolly girl would be out of place in a parish, among the poor and the sick. She would be distinctly out of place by a sick-bed.

He revolved all these things in his mind during the warm summer nights after those long walks with Rosey. Sometimes he would go indoors with her, and she would sing his favourite hymns to him; and then he would come away more harassed with that dreadful doubt than ever.

He would even go so far, sometimes, as to ask himself what there was in Mary Gray that had attracted him.

It is hard on a girl when her lover begins this sort of analysis.

Keith Fellowes asked the question somewhat fearfully, as if treading on sacred ground. But he could find no answer to it.

It wasn't because she was clever or wise: she couldn't even pass the Little-go — or sympathetic, or gentle, or tender: she was none of these. She was a jolly girl, and she had bright eyes.

Adela's eyes were bright, too; and so were Jack's, especially after a college wine.

No; it couldn't be her eyes.

Besides, they would grow dull with the years, and her beauty would fade; and she wouldn't always be jolly.

There are other qualities a man wants by

his hearth beside bright eyes and high spirits : they are very well for fair weather ; but the sun will not always shine, and the dark days will surely come when the brightest eyes will grow dim and the most buoyant spirits will fail.

The Junior Dean was, perhaps, not very far wrong when he decided that it was other qualities than these that he desired in his future wife.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NEW MAGDALENE.

‘Faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him.’

THERE was capital bathing at Llanberys ; there were miles and miles of level sands, and there was a breakwater that went out into the sea and protected the shore. It was almost impossible for an accident to happen within its shelter, but there were notices stuck up everywhere warning visitors not to bathe beyond it.

Of course they were unavailing. Everybody who could swim at all went beyond it. The Junior Dean, who ought to have shown a

better example, used to row out in a boat a long way beyond the breakwater and take his morning dip.

Rosey, who was a practised swimmer, swam out beyond it every day. It was one of the events of the day at Llanberys to see Rosey bathe. She swam out farther than any other female had ever ventured on that coast. Indeed, she swam out so far that she could be only seen from the land a little speck bobbing up and down among the waves, and often in rough weather she was lost sight of altogether.

Nervous women had frightened themselves into fits about her, and men had watched her uneasily with their telescopes, and debated within themselves whether it was not their duty to throw off their coats and plunge in the sea after her.

When the excitement had reached its height, Rosey would reappear fresh and

smiling, and emerge from the waves with the water dripping off her white rounded limbs.

People got used to her in time; she had played upon their feelings so often that they ceased to be anxious about her. If she had stayed out in the sea bobbing about all day they wouldn't have concerned themselves about her.

One stormy day, when the sea was much too rough for any one else to bathe, Rosey had swum out beyond the breakwater in her accustomed way. The men on the shore followed her curiously with their glasses as she rose and fell with the waves.

There was a big ground-swell beyond the breakwater, and the tide was running out. It was running out very swiftly, with a stiff breeze, and it was nothing less than reckless and foolhardy to go so far from land on such a day.

There was not a man on the beach who would have attempted it.

Those who watched grew anxious in spite of themselves, and one man spoke to a sailor who was standing near about sending out a boat after her.

The man laughed and shook his head. 'Her'll do, sir,' he said, looking out with that cool indifference of sailors to the dark heaving sea where a little speck, quite a long way off, was floating about ; it wasn't bobbing up and down now, 'her knows what her's about.'

And so they let her alone. It was the old story of the boy and the wolf. Rosey had cried 'Wolf, wolf!' so often, and now that she was in real danger they were going to leave her to drown.

The tide was carrying her away farther and farther from land, and she was making no effort to return. It would have been un-

availing if she had, with that ever-widening distance from the shore, and her strength already exhausted. She was floating like a dead log on the waves, and being carried whither they would.

A boat rounded the point as she was being carried unresistingly out to sea. There were two men in it—at least, a man was rowing, and another was climbing up the side. It was the Junior Dean, who had just taken his dip. As he stood up in the boat preparing to dress, the boatman pointed out the distant object floating on the water.

He rubbed the water out of his eyes, and watched the rapid current bearing it unresistingly away. But he did not watch for long. He saw in a moment that it was human—it was no ordinary flotsam or jetsam—and that it was being carried away by the tide.

It never occurred to him it was Rosey.

Whoever it was, was rapidly and surely drifting away from the shores of life to the great ocean of eternity. There was no help near ; there was not a single boat in sight : a few minutes—perhaps seconds—and all help would be in vain.

Keith Fellowes, as he stood up in the boat following that distant object with his straining eyes, realized only one thing : that it was a fellow-creature, and that it was going into its Creator's presence unprepared.

He didn't stay to think whether the task were hopeless or not ; he flung himself into the sea and struck out, and the boat followed in his wake.

He got into the current that was bearing its human burden rapidly out to sea, and the strong tide bore him along with it. He distanced the boat in a few strokes, and struck out with a fierce energy that his Cambridge friends wouldn't have given him

credit for. But it was his Cambridge training that stood him in good stead now : to it he owed the nerve and physical strength that enabled him to hold out, and to wrest from the hungry sea its latest prey.

He saw the white shining limbs borne up and down on the waves, and the long yellow hair floating like seaweed on the water, and he coiled his hand in it and drew the senseless, drifting figure towards the boat.

He kept it up until the boat reached them, and then with much difficulty they got it in, and he reverently covered the woman he had saved with his clothes till they reached the shore.

It was not until they lifted her out, and delivered her to the women that were collected on the beach, that Keith Fellowes recognised that it was Rosey.

He delivered her to the women, and then he got some clothes on and went home and

thanked God for His great deliverance, and that he had been permitted to save the life of a fellow-creature.

He was so nervous and anxious all that day that he couldn't keep away from the corner house of the esplanade where Rosey lodged, though he had heard that she was going on quite well. He gave the brass band that was playing in front of the house a shilling to go away where their noise wouldn't disturb her.

He called at the house to inquire for her in the afternoon, and the woman took him upstairs. Rosey wished to see him.

She was up and dressed; at least, she was in a flowing wrapper, and lying on a couch in the drawing-room.

She wasn't looking very much the worse for the adventure. She had fainted from exhaustion, and was insensible, when she was brought ashore; but she had rapidly recovered,

and she was almost herself again, but her nerves were terribly shaken. She was paler than usual, which might be expected, and her hair had lost its metallic sheen—perhaps it was not yet dry—and the deep shadows that the Junior Dean thought so lovely were no longer beneath her eyes.

She was a little weak and low, which might be expected; and when he came into the room and took her hand, she burst into tears.

‘Oh, Mr. Fellowes, you have saved my life!’

They were genuine tears, and they ran down her pale cheeks unchecked, and fell upon his hand.

‘Where should I have been *now* if you had not come to my aid? Oh, where should I have been?’

‘Where, indeed!’

Keith Fellowes was deeply touched, and a mist came before his eyes.

‘ You would have been in His presence,’ he said gravely. ‘ Oh ! my dear sister, were you prepared for that great change ?’

‘ Oh no—no ! I am a miserable, sinful woman !’ she cried bitterly, clinging to the kind hand that had saved her.

And then she poured out a wretched incoherent story of past folly and sin. She named no names : she freely acknowledged her weakness and guilt, and implored him to pray for her.

She was quite in earnest. The awful peril she had been in had touched her sinful soul as nothing else could have done. Like the Peri in Moore’s sad song, she had looked through the doors of Paradise ; she had heard afar off its melodies, and the gate was closing upon her. The cry that has rung through all the ages was upon her lips—an exceeding bitter cry !

It was not for His servant, who rebuked not

the sinful woman, to turn away from this weeping Magdalene. He stayed with her till the evening shadows had begun to lengthen, and comforted her with the message of pardon and reconciliation it was his high office to bear.

He visited her daily through that eventful week. She was much changed. Her skirts no longer rustled with a seductive *frou-frou* on the floor ; her colour was gone ; there were no dark shadows beneath her eyes, and the metallic sheen had entirely disappeared from her pretty fair hair. She was more natural and simple in her appearance and dress, and her manner was strangely saddened and subdued.

She hung upon Keith Fellowes' visits with a yearning that was quite pitiful. She was thankful for the smallest crumbs of kindness that he showed her. She never missed a service at his church. She led the singing

with her beautiful voice, with an earnestness and devotion that were unmistakable. She wept through all his sermons. She followed him about with the dumb devotion of a dog. There was nothing in the world she was not prepared to do to show the reality of her conversion.

‘Oh!’ she would say in her artless way, with her beautiful tell-tale eyes full of tears, ‘you—you don’t know how everything has changed since I’ve known you, Mr. Fellowes! I’ve changed, too; and, oh! how I want to—to be——’

She couldn’t finish the sentence, but he could finish it for her; and he would go away with his heart thumping and a mist before his eyes, and pray humbly for this dear wayworn sinner.

Rosey really was, for once, in earnest. She was not shamming; she was honest in her

convictions. There comes a time in every life, however careless, when the truth forces itself with a startling pertinacity upon the mind, that things will not always go on as they are going on, and that an end will come. It had come to vain, shallow, frivolous little Rosey quite suddenly. It had come to her on the day when she was being borne out by the tide. Whither the tide was carrying her she could not tell ; to a great limitless ocean, maybe—to a sad, distant shore, where there was no Kind Face to greet her. All the follies and frailties of her past butterfly life had risen up before her, as such things do to the drowning, in that awful moment when her strength and her courage had failed her. She could not look back to that time now without a shudder. But for Keith Fellowes' timely aid she would have gone out with the tide—and the world would have gone on just the same without her.

And then it came to her, as it comes to most people who have passed through the fire and been burnt: she wanted to warn others of their danger; she wanted to be useful.

‘If you will only let me do something in the parish!’ she said to the Junior Dean one day with streaming eyes. ‘I could teach the little children; I could read to the old women; I—I could speak to the girls!’ And then her face grew rosy red, and the corners of her mouth trembled.

Yes; Rosey was very much in earnest. Her earnestness touched the Junior Dean, and it also aroused in him that odious injustice to the woman he loved—comparison.

Molly had no cravings for usefulness: she never taught little children; she hated old women; she didn’t like talking to girls; she would very much rather talk to men.

Keith Fellowes gave Rosey the work she desired. He gave her a class in the Sunday-

school; he gave her the old women in the almshouses to read to; and he gave her an evening class of girls who were preparing for service.

The work was strange to her, and a short time ago it would have been the most uncongenial work in the world; but she applied herself to it with all her heart, and the results were far beyond the Junior Dean's expectations. The bedridden old women in the almshouses declared that she was the best lady visitor they had ever had. She had entered into all their little troubles and ailments with her ready sympathy, and had sung to them the hymns of their childhood with the voice of an angel!

He was sure she would do that.

He heard her singing once in a poor cottage as he passed, and he paused to listen. It was to a bedridden old cobbler, who had the reputation of being an infidel, and who had received

all his ministrations hitherto with apathetic indifference.

He went into the next cottage, and as he waited for the door to be opened he heard Rosey's voice rising with a pathetic intensity in the little room on the other side of the hedge. The window was open, and the sweet, solemn words floated out into the dusky twilight:

‘If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
Not till earth, and not till heaven,
Pass away.’

He went in to see the old man when Rosey had left him, and found him softened and subdued. She had been able to do more with him with her singing than he had all the months that he had been at Llanberys with all his preaching and prayers.

The little Sunday class of village children used to follow Rosey about the place, and gather round her on the beach, when she took

her daily walks ; and he often came across her reading to them or telling them stories, the centre of an eager group of listeners.

She had altered her mode of living since that memorable day ; she had packed away all her trinkets and her *frou-frou* gowns—at least, he supposed they were packed away ; he never saw them now—and she had changed her rooms. She still lived at the same house ; the woman who kept it was the mother of a girl who belonged to the same dramatic company, but she had gone up higher. It used to be *au second*, it was now *au troisième*, and the rooms were smaller and very plainly furnished. She explained the necessity for this one day when the Junior Dean called upon her.

‘I am retrenching my expenses, Mr. Fellowes,’ she said, with a faint attempt at a smile, and he noticed that her lip quivered as she spoke. ‘I ought to have done it before,

but—but I did not know until now that I was not going back.'

She didn't say where she was not going back, but he understood her.

'You have decided, then?' and his face lit up; 'you have decided to leave the stage, Rose?'

He called her Rose.

'Yes; I have quite decided.'

She did not sigh or look back, as some have looked back after they have made a renunciation; but she looked up with a sudden sweet expectation in her lovely eyes and met that glad recognition in his face.

'Oh, I am so thankful! Oh, my dear sister, I am so glad!'

He took both her hands in his and pressed them, and she laid her cheek softly upon his folded hands in her caressing way and kissed them.

He had quite forgotten Molly as he stood

there for the moment bending over Rose De l'Orme.

‘And what do you propose to do, dear Rose?’ he asked almost huskily, and his heart was thumping in a most ridiculous manner.

‘Oh, Mr. Fellowes, what can I do?’ she said sadly, still caressing his hands; ‘I am not fit for anything. No one would have me in their families after being on the stage. I want you to tell me what I ought to do. Oh, I do so want your—your friendship—and advice! If I give up the stage I have no friend left in the world; I have no one but you.’

She was sobbing softly, and her warm tears were dropping on his hands. He did not take them away, but he sat down on the couch beside her. Her evident distress and friendlessness touched him, and he hated to see a woman weep. Molly never wept.

He thought of Molly as this dear woman by

his side appealed to him for help, and as he felt her warm caressing fingers clinging to his.

If it had not been for Molly, he—well, he would have answered her differently.

‘How can I help you, dear Rose?’ he asked, bending over her.

‘Oh, Mr. Fellowes, how can I tell you? I am in debt—dreadfully in debt. I have pawned all my things, and—and I haven’t a penny in the world!’

She burst into a passionate fit of sobbing after this confession, and—what could the Junior Dean do? he was ridiculously soft-hearted, and couldn’t bear to see a woman cry—he put his arms around her and comforted her, as he would have comforted a child; and Rosey sobbed out her griefs in that honourable shelter.

‘What do you owe, Rose?’ he asked.

‘I—I owe the woman here thirty pounds.’

‘And is that all?’

‘There are some little things in the place. but they can wait. The landlady here has been very cruel—and rude : she would not let me stop in my own rooms. She let them over my head, and brought all my things up here. She has taken my jewellery and dresses, and pawned them, and they do not make up half the amount I owe her; and she declares she will put me in prison for the rest. Oh, she is a cruel, cruel woman! It is only since I told her I had given up the stage—she never complained before. She knew I earned the money easily, and spent it easily.’

‘The woman must be paid, and you must leave here,’ said the Junior Dean. ‘There are plenty of lodgings in the place; you shall not stay another day with such—such an unprincipled woman!’

And he went away forthwith and took lodgings for Rosey in another part of the

place. He took them himself, and was very careful about the aspect, as she suffered from sudden attacks of asthma, and he sent in some flowers to brighten up the rooms he had taken for her; and because there was no piano, he hired the best instrument that could be got in the place, and had it tuned and brought over to the new lodgings before she arrived. 'Poor dear woman!' he said; 'how shameful to treat her in this heartless way because she has left the stage! Oh, it is too cruel!'

He paid the lodging-house keeper the thirty pounds that Rosey owed her before he took her away, and the woman gave a receipt for it in his name. He gave Rosey some money to go on with—two crisp bank-notes, the last he had brought with him for his expenses during this most economical vacation.

There was a great deal of talk about Rosey's future. He made it his one object during those last few weeks of his stay.

He wrote to all his friends enlisting their interest for a lady with a charming voice. He said nothing about the theatre. Nobody happened to want a lady with a charming voice; nobody wanted lessons in singing; nobody wanted a lay helper in a parish who could play the organ and train the choir. He put advertisements in the *Guardian* and the *Times*, and half a dozen other papers, with the same result. Nobody wanted a lady with a charming voice.

He had reckoned without his host, or, rather, he had undertaken more than he had reckoned upon, when he told her to have no anxiety about the future; that the future—her future—should be his care.

He owned himself beaten when it came to the last week of his stay in Llanberys. He was no nearer than when he began in finding a home, or a position, for Rosey.

He couldn't take her back to Cambridge.

He admitted to himself that it wouldn't do to take rooms for her—an actress, a reformed actress—under the very eyes of the dons; and Molly might object.

Clearly he would have to go his way and leave her behind until something suitable could be found. Meanwhile, he would pay her rent and defray such little necessary expenses as she incurred.

‘I will be on the look-out, Rose,’ he said on that last night, as he sat by her side in the shaded lamp-lit room. ‘I will leave no stone unturned to find something suitable—quite suitable. You will stay here for the present, until you hear from me. You will not go back, dear Rose, to that—that old life.’

‘I will never go back!’ said Rosey hysterically.

‘No?’ he said—‘not when I am gone, and there is no one here to advise you, when

—when you have forgotten me, and the words I have spoken; you will not go back then, Rose?’

‘As if I could ever forget you!’ she said passionately. ‘As if your words were not always in my ears; as if you were ever absent from my mind, sleeping or waking; as if every thought of my heart, every desire of my soul, were not bound up in you! Oh, you don’t know, you can never know, Mr. Fellowes, what you are to me!’

‘Hush, Rose!’ he said hastily, almost harshly; ‘you must not think of me in this light; you must not make me take the place of Providence.’

‘But you are my Providence!’ sobbed the girl, burying her face in her hands to conceal the blushes—the quite real blushes—that were dyeing her cheeks. ‘And I want no other. I only want to be your servant, your slave, the dust under your feet, so long as I am near

you and can hear your voice. Oh, I can never live without hearing your voice, without touching your hand sometimes !

Keith Fellowes flushed scarlet while Rosey made this startling confession, and then turned white to the lips. He had remembered Molly.

‘ You do—not—mean——’ he stammered, and then he looked down at the blushing face and the love-lit eyes. He could not mistake what he read there. ‘ Oh, why had I never thought of this before ! Oh, Rose, Rose, how long has this madness been ?’

‘ How long ? Ever since I have known you, Keith. How could I know you without loving you ?’ she answered shyly.

‘ My dear girl——’ he began, and then he stopped himself, while she waited eagerly.

What could he say to her ?

‘ My dear Rose,’ he said, ‘ this—this is madness ; I am only an instrument—a poor,

lame instrument in the hands of Providence. I am thankful to have been of use to you ; but you must not confound me with the Providence that threw me in your way.'

'You are *my* Providence !' said Rosey softly, and then she imprisoned his hand and kissed it humbly, and let her tears fall upon it.

'No, no,' he said almost severely, trying to disengage his hand ; 'this is nothing less than worship. Remember, I am only a poor, sinful fellow-creature ; I have done nothing for you more than any other man would have done.'

'You have saved my life,' Rose sobbed, still clinging to his hand. 'You saved my miserable life. It was worthless to me, and I had given it up, but you brought me back to life—and—and love. You saved it for yourself. Who should I worship if I should not worship you, my master, my preserver ?'

She threw herself on the ground before

him, and was sobbing in a passion of tears and entreaty at his knees. He tried to raise her, but she clung hysterically to his knees and covered his hands with kisses.

‘Oh, my master! my dear, dear master!’ she sobbed in the wild abandonment of her passion.

It was a very embarrassing position for the Junior Dean.

CHAPTER XVII.

OCTOBER TERM.

‘When he was young as you are young,
When songs were sung, and lutes were strung,
And love lamps in the windows hung.’

It was October term and everybody had come up. The silent courts echoed again to hurrying footsteps and youthful laughter. There were fresh young faces in the old seats in chapel; there were new guests in the old places in Hall. The old, worn staircases echoed to the tread of new feet—eager, impetuous feet, not so firm or so self-reliant as those that had passed away—and there were new names painted in white letters over the old doors.

Mr. Brackenbury's name was still over the low doorway at the top of the stairs. He had yet another term to keep, before his three years' residence would be complete ; and he had his ' General ' still before him.

He had come up early, and had been proctorized twice during the first week for evading certain University regulations. Jack had also come up, but he had happily not been ' progged.' He had come up, he said, to work, and he had not sought Mr. Brackenbury's society as heretofore.

He was not the same Jack who had come up so fresh and eager in the May term—perhaps no man is exactly what he was a term ago. He was moody, not to say glum ; and he had grown nervous and irritable in that dreary long vacation, during which he had had nothing but the society of an old man and a lot of chattering girls, and had found his only solace in the village ale-house.

The Junior Dean had come up, and he also was changed. He, too, had grown nervous and more absent-minded than ever, since Rosey's embarrassing avowal. He had left her behind at Llanberys, and she had promised to remain in virtuous retirement in that secluded and now deserted watering-place until he could find her a suitable home.

He had not saved that hundred pounds which he had counted upon towards furnishing the dear little house.

He had to pay several bills for Rosey, besides the lodging-house keeper's; and he had left with her all his spare cash. He had come back from that fortunate *locum tenency* much poorer than when he went away.

He felt quite miserable and conscience-stricken when he met Molly for the first time that term, and she made a laughing reference to that hundred pounds.

He hadn't the courage to tell her that it was all gone—irrevocably gone.

There was nobody in Cambridge that he could take into his confidence to advise him in the matter of Rosey but Mr. Flynt, the mathematical tutor of St. Stephen's. He didn't expect sympathy, but he knew he should get advice—sound advice.

Mr. Flynt, Fellow and Senior Tutor of St. Stephen's, was not exactly a woman-hater : he was known and welcomed in every drawing-room in Cambridge; but he had managed to keep single until his hair had grown so gray that the gentler sex had ceased to exercise their innocent wiles upon him.

The Junior Dean walked over to his rooms with him after Hall, and talked the matter over by his fireside, as he smoked his after-dinner pipe.

Looking round his cosy bachelor-room, he envied the learned calm of the old college

tutor, who could do without women's society, and didn't get himself mixed up with damsels of questionable antecedents.

'Well,' said the tutor genially, 'and how have you spent the vac. ? Have you had a good time at—at Llan—Llan——'

'Llanberys,' added the Junior Dean ; and then his face began to flush ridiculously. He felt he was getting hot all over, and stuttered and stammered in a most absurd way.

'I have not had a very good time ; that is, I was disappointed in the place. It is a dreadful place, with a horrible band, and—and bathing-machines.'

'Most seaside places have horrible bands and bathing-machines,' said the tutor dryly ; 'those are very small discomforts if the drainage is all right. You have not come back looking very well.'

'Oh, the air was beautiful, and the place was healthy enough. I've had a good deal of

trouble lately—at least, anxiety ; and that reminds me that I wanted to ask your advice.’

‘ Ah ! ’ said the tutor, dropping his voice with quite touching sympathy. ‘ Nothing wrong with Miss Gray, I hope ? ’

‘ No ; there is nothing wrong with Miss Gray, thank God ! ’

‘ About your marriage ? You are to be married, I hear, before next term. I—I’m sure I congratulate you. I’m not a marrying man myself, but I like to hear of other fellows being married—and happy. I hope you will be happy, I’m sure.’

‘ Thank you,’ said the Junior Dean stiffly, growing redder and redder. The conversation was not at all to the point. ‘ It was not about Molly—about Miss Gray—I wanted to consult you : it was about a young lady I—I’m interested in.’

‘ Oh, another young lady ! ’ said the tutor with a humorous twinkle in his eyes. ‘ Well,

and how can I help you with the other young lady ?

‘That’s exactly what I want to know,’ said the Junior Dean, with that tell-tale colour in his cheeks, and his voice faltering in spite of himself. ‘The fact is, I—I’m interested in a young lady who has the most beautiful voice in the world ; and I—I want to find a—a position—a situation—or, rather, a home for her.’

He had made a terrible hash of it ; and he stopped short, with the tutor’s keen gray eyes searching his tell-tale face.

“A young lady with the most beautiful voice in the world !” he repeated. ‘Presumably the young lady has friends. Would not the young lady’s friends be the most fit persons to procure her the—the situation she desires?’

‘She has no friends.’

‘Oh, that alters the position ! Has this beautiful voice you speak of been trained ?’

‘It has been perfectly trained.’

‘Then why not consult some skilled professional? She might take up music as a profession. She might sing at concerts; large sums are paid, I believe, to lady singers at concerts. I know we have paid a large sum to a lady, a professional singer, to sing at our college concerts.’

‘She has already taken up music as a profession.’

‘And has failed?’

‘By no means. She has been a most successful singer!’

‘Then, why not stick to her profession?’

‘She has given it up by my advice. She—er—has—er—convictions that—that it is not altogether the kind of life she desires to lead. There are temptations and influences in the—er—life of a—a public singer that I do not think it desirable that she should be exposed to.’

The Junior Dean stammered and stuttered through these sentences in a confused and shamefaced manner, halting every now and then to find a word, and blushing painfully all the time.

The tutor took the pipe out of his mouth and relieved his feelings with a prolonged whistle.

‘Oh,’ he remarked significantly, ‘that’s how the land lies ! A reformed character ; serious convictions ; unwilling to go back to the old life. Exactly ! Now, will you tell me, Fellowes, where you met this interesting female ?’

‘She was one of my congregation at Llanberys.’

‘And you had never met her before ?’

‘No ; she was quite a stranger to me until I heard her sing in church. She had the most beautiful voice——’

‘You have told me that before,’ interrupted

the tutor unfeelingly. 'Who were the people this—er—female was staying with?'

'She was not staying with anyone: she was alone. She had come down after the season for rest and quiet.'

'Without a chaperon? Do I understand you she was staying in this watering-place alone?'

'She had no chaperon. It is not usual, I believe, in her class.'

'Oh, I beg your pardon: in her class! You have not told me the name and position of this lady, nor her age. I presume she is young.'

'She is quite young. Her professional name is Rose De l'Orme—Mdlle. Rose De l'Orme.'

'Phew! An actress, by Jove!' said the tutor, and his face grew suddenly grave.

'She has left the stage, and by my advice she will not go back to it. She is quite

earnest in her convictions. Her conversion has been the only satisfactory incident in—in my stay at Llanberys. I suppose that is why I was sent there. Nothing of this kind ever happens by chance. I have taken upon myself to advise her to quit a lucrative profession, and I am bound in honour to help her to find some other mode of living.’

His face was no longer flushed ; it had grown white while he was speaking, and his lip twitched nervously.

‘ Her profession, you say, has been a lucrative one,’ said Mr. Flynt gravely, almost coldly. ‘ She has probably been able to lay aside some of her earnings that would render your aid superfluous.’

‘ On the contrary, she has been in the most distressed circumstances ; her landlady, the woman where she lodged, used her cruelly—pawnd her things—and—and threatened to put her to prison. I don’t know what she

would have done if I hadn't gone to her aid.'

'And you lent her money?'

'I paid the woman the sum due to her; and I found her fresh lodgings.'

'And how is she living now, pray?'

'I left a little money with her, what I could spare; and I promised to look out for something for her to do.'

'Exactly—exactly!'

It would be quite impossible to convey the tone in which the tutor of St. Stephen's uttered these two words. It was not an agreeable tone. It brought the colour back to the Junior Dean's face, and little beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

'You don't mean——' he said feebly.

'Yes, I do mean,' said the tutor impatiently, almost angrily—'I mean that you've been making a pretty fool of yourself, Fellowes! I beg your pardon, but I can't help saying it.'

You've been taken in by a designing woman ; and you've got yourself mixed up with disreputable people, and you've thrown away your money. Take my advice, Fellowes : let the young woman with the beautiful voice go. Don't have anything more to do with her ; and, if I were you, I wouldn't say anything about the matter to anybody. It wouldn't do to get to Miss Gray's ears.'

'And you won't help me ?' said the Junior Dean desperately ; 'you won't try to think of some way in which I can help her ? Remember, I have given my word.'

'I decline altogether to be mixed up with the matter,' said the tutor very emphatically. 'I look upon it as a most questionable thing for a man in your position to be keeping an actress. I—I really have no patience with you, Fellowes—and engaged to that nice girl, too ! Good-night ; I really am very busy, and I would rather say no more about the matter.'

The Junior Dean went back to his rooms feeling very helpless and miserable. He had depended upon the advice and assistance of Mr. Flynt, and he had declined in the most positive way to help him ; and he had said things that made him feel hot all over.

While he was still chafing under Mr. Flynt's cruel words he sat down and wrote to Rosey.

He told her that his search hitherto had been unsuccessful for the position that he desired for her, and he suggested that she should advertise in certain newspapers, say the *Guardian*, the *Record*, or even the *Rock*—he did not mention the *Era*. He also enclosed a cheque, as she had told him, in a dreadfully ill-spelt letter he had received that morning, that she had no money left.

The letter smelt beautifully ; and it was written on dainty rose-coloured paper, with

the loveliest monogram in wreathed roses. He was not accustomed to receive letters from prima donnas, and he didn't know whether it might not be their way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DEBATE AT THE UNION.

‘The world is so full of a number of things,
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.’

MOLLY had returned to Newnham. She had come back in the best possible spirits. There was not a single cloud upon the horizon.

She was to be married in a few months, and her heart of bliss was full.

It had been a delightful vacation ; she had felt it would be her last at the old home, and she had made the most of it. She had gone about the house all day singing a little old-fashioned ditty that seemed to just suit her case.

Up and down the wide sunny staircase, in and out the pleasant sunny rooms, on the broad velvet lawn of the Vicarage, where the sun loved to linger, she roamed singing out of the very gladness of her heart :

‘ I love the merry, merry sunshine,
It makes my heart so glad !’

That was the key to the whole matter.

She didn’t love the sunshine because it was ripening the harvest, or shining on the homes of the poor and doing untold good all over the parish — because it was a universal benefactor.

She didn’t love it because the old people sat at their doors and basked in it—because the children rejoiced in it. She hated children, and she had no sympathy with old people. She loved it because her heart was so full of sunshine with that intoxicating, dazzling joy, the prospect of life-long happiness.

It was a supreme moment. There are supreme moments in all lives, and it had come to Molly. The absolute royalty of youth, and health and love were hers, and there was not a single cloud on the horizon. She could not understand anything coming in the way of her happiness. She had never met with any opposition she could not put aside in her arbitrary imperious way. She could not understand that she had been born for anything but to be loved, and admired, and happy. She looked upon happiness as her due, with a distinct feeling of deserving it.

The unhappy had always seemed to her another order of beings — a very tiresome order—and her pity for them was a mere abstraction.

Her lover ought to have been equally happy; but he was torn with cruel suspicions and harassed with doubts. He had not a confidante to go to like Molly. He had gone

to his friend and counsellor, the tutor of St. Stephen's, and he had declined to have anything to do with that delicate little business that was troubling him. He had washed his hands of the matter.

Men are naturally less sympathetic and more reticent about themselves than women. So while the Junior Dean locked up the little secret that was troubling him in his own bosom, Molly, with a feminine instinct to impart confidence and expect sympathy, poured her innocent tale of unclouded happiness into Dorothy Piggott's sympathetic ears.

Miss Piggott had come back after her great success to read for another Tripos.

There was quite a flutter at the dovecot of Newnham when this was known. Nobody could predict the issues that might arise. It is not every victor who pushes forward his conquests. Many are content to retire on their well-earned laurels. But Miss Piggott,

the champion of the women's colleges, had again come to the front.

A whisper—an awful whisper—ran through the courts and lecture rooms, and even penetrated into the Senate House, that for the first time in the history of the University there would be a lady competitor for the Smith's Prize.

To be a Smith's Prizeman is, without doubt, the highest distinction that can happen to a man at the University. It is always carried off by the best mathematician of the year. There could be no doubt if Dorothy Piggott competed for it what the result would be. There could be but one result.

A Smith's Prizewoman !

The University had made concessions, great concessions, to the women's colleges, and with the most unexpected results. It had beheld with bated breath a sweet girl graduate assume the proud distinction of Senior Classic,

and now a Second Wrangler in petticoats had distanced all the crowd.

The humiliation of another defeat was averted by the wisdom of the Senate. A solemn decree went forth that no woman should be eligible to receive the Smith's Prize. The University thought it unseemly that women should carry off its much-coveted prizes. They might win distinction, but they could receive no outward symbol of success.

Dorothy Piggott did not take the disappointment very much to heart. She settled down to work in her quiet, methodical way ; there were other things in Cambridge besides a Smith's Prize she coveted.

She had brought back among her things a bit of ribbon with the colours of the St. Stephen's Boat Club. The colours had run into one another as if it had been in the water. It was a faded, disreputable bit of ribbon, and it

was quite out of place among her dainty knickknacks.

It was a souvenir of that memorable night when Molly was upset in the Granta. It was the bit of ribbon off Mr. Brackenbury's hat.

People who called Dorothy Piggott stolid and phlegmatic would have reconsidered their verdict had they seen her press the washed-out thing to her lips and lay it caressingly against her cheek. Fortunately nobody saw her.

There was no more talk of a Newnham boat on the river. The project had fallen through, and all Mr. Brackenbury's coaching was lost. Dorothy had had few opportunities of seeing Mr. Brackenbury this term. He was not likely to put in an appearance at any of the lectures she attended, and he was never seen at the 'Varsity Church, and the music at King's had no attraction for him. She looked

in vain for him over the edge of the high pews at St. Mary's with a trembling hope that he might be among the yawning, indifferent undergraduates in the galleries ; and she went back to Newnham disappointed, and applied herself with renewed vigour to her darling mathematics.

The first time she met him after that day when he stood bare-headed on the steps as she passed out of the Senate House after her great success, was at a debate at the Union.

The subject of the night's debate was an exciting one, and attracted an unusually large attendance of the students of the women's colleges.

All the girls at Newnham who were so fortunate as to get tickets went in a body. Jack, who was a member of the Union, had got tickets for Molly and her friend.

The girls crowded into the well-lighted hall and up the wide staircase like an invading

army, and put the modest undergraduates, who were standing about pretending to be reading, to flight.

Molly would loiter behind the rest to read all the notices on the big notice-boards on the staircase, and the consequence was that, when she and Dorothy got up into the gallery reserved for visitors, there was no room for them with the others, and they had to squeeze in where they could. They were fortunate enough to get a front place where they could look down upon the men in the crowded hall beneath ; but they were a long way from Miss Godolphin and her party.

An intrepid undergraduate, who had a sister at Girton, moved the motion of the evening, 'That women be admitted to B.A. degrees.' He made a lovely speech—it was rumoured that his sister had written it—claiming to speak for a constituency not otherwise represented. He drew a touching

picture of the enthusiastic pursuit of science by lady students, as proved by their recent appearance at a lecture on ‘The Cells of the Liver of a Frog.’

It was a lively debate, though, of course, the opener’s speech was quite unanswerable.

Some disagreeable self-opinionated undergraduates got up and endeavoured in the most flippant way to turn everything to ridicule. The rippling loquacity of these unfeeling youths was unbearable.

There was a flutter—a distinct flutter—in the gallery, and Newnham and Girton, as the poet of the Union expressed it,

‘Grew angry and pale,
And chill was each brow beneath bonnet and veil ;
All silent, while smiles were disdainfully thrown
To glances uplifted of speakers unknown.’

It was really past bearing, the self-sufficiency and puerile platitudes of those flippant undergraduates. Dorothy Piggott was deeply moved. She turned from red to

white and from white to red, and the men were all looking up at her. She didn't smile disdainfully down upon them, but she looked through their ranks, from bank to bench, for a champion.

The opposition benches were crowded. It was quite hopeless to look among them ; but even while she looked, a man rose up from the back and crossed the hall, and took his seat on the front bench among the ayes. It was Mr. Brackenbury.

He had seen Dorothy Piggott's appealing glance, and had stepped forward in the arena, and taken up the glove for the distressed damsels in the gallery.

It didn't much matter to Mr. Brackenbury which side he took.

He stood up with that half-smile on his face, and his long black hair falling over his eyes; and both sides of the house greeted his appearance with a low murmur of applause,

and the women all smiled kindly down upon him.

He hadn't very much to say, and he said it in his playful, airy, careless way, skirmishing round the question, and stumbling purposely in a most provoking manner over the arguments that had been brought forward by the opposition. He crushed them all with his playful irony, and concluded with a touching and eloquent appeal to the chivalrous feelings of the University on behalf of the sweet girl graduates in the gallery, and sat down amid a storm of applause.

The minute-hand of that troublesome clock, that is so much *en évidence* at the Union, pointed to a quarter to ten, and there was a general rise among the students of Girton and Newnham.

The girls would have given their ears to have waited to hear the rejoinder to Mr. Brackenbury's delightful speech ; but Miss

Godolphin was inexorable, and slowly and unwillingly they filed out.

Perhaps it was quite as well they didn't wait.

Molly and Miss Piggott had not come in with the rest, and they couldn't be expected to go out with the rest. They had to squeeze by everybody, and then they had to find their shawls in the room outside, and, naturally, when they reached the lobby, the main body of the Newnham girls had disappeared, and they were left to follow behind.

Mr. Brackenbury was in the lobby when they came downstairs. Molly was so pleased with him for his gallant defence of women's rights that she forgot that affair of the Granta, and shook hands with him.

He walked through Trinity Street with the two girls ; at least, he walked beside Dorothy Piggott, and Molly went on in front. The

pavements of the streets of Cambridge are narrow, and one cannot walk more than two abreast.

‘Oh, it was lovely!’ said Dorothy; ‘you said exactly the right thing, Mr. Brackenbury, and you said it beautifully! I’m sure you ought not to be here; you ought to go back and hear what dreadful things they are saying about your speech. You ought to be there to answer them.’

‘I always come away directly I have finished speaking,’ said Mr. Brackenbury laughingly. ‘They are welcome to cut me up as much as they like; it doesn’t affect me. I make it a rule never to hear anything unpleasant. I never open letters that look disagreeable; I always drop them in the fire.’

‘Oh, Mr. Brackenbury, how dreadful! You might burn the wrong one.’

‘That is not very likely; I have few correspondents beside duns;’ and he laughed

as if he thought it were a joke, but Dorothy was silent.

‘I suppose girls have no duns?’ he said presently.

‘I have no duns,’ said Miss Piggott, in rather a shocked voice; ‘but I suppose men have more expenses than girls. I’m sure a girl would open her bills and add them up, even if she couldn’t pay them.’

She was thinking how much she would like to add up Mr. Brackenbury’s bills, and wondering whether the weight of them caused that pensive expression she admired so much in his face.

Molly was a long way ahead, but the advance column was out of sight; they would have to walk back alone to Newnham. Dorothy Piggott was provoking; she lagged behind with Mr. Brackenbury in that ridiculous way in which she had crossed Midsummer Common after she had seen the ‘eights’

practising. Molly had no patience with her, and kept well in front all the way.

She could hear Mr. Brackenbury's voice quite a long way behind, and Dolly's soft and tremulous. They were no longer talking about duns, or degrees for women—they were talking about the future.

Mr. Brackenbury had congratulated Miss Piggott on her great success. He had deplored the cruel injustice of the Senate which had debarred her crowning it with that distinguishing mark of scholarship which a Smith's Prize would confer. He had asked her, lightly perhaps, but with that pensive manner that gave a deeper meaning to his words, if there was nothing in the world beyond a Smith's Prize that was worth a woman's winning.

He had sighed exactly at the right moment; and as, the night being dark, Miss Piggott would run into the hedge, he had considerably

guided her through the darkness, and he felt the little hand on his arm tremble as he asked the question.

It was a great pity they were so near Newnham. They walked as slowly as they could, with Molly leading the way; and the gate was just in sight.

‘I have no personal ambition,’ he said, speaking low, so that Molly did not catch a word—perhaps he was thinking of his ‘General’—‘life has other prizes beside University distinction. If it were not presumptuous, there is a prize that I would devote my whole life to win.’ He stopped suddenly, and sighed; they were close to the gate, and Molly was holding it open for Dorothy to pass in.

‘It could not be too presumptuous; for such—such a sacrifice, Mr. Brackenbury,’ said Dolly softly, ‘it ought to be the greatest prize in the world!’

‘It is the greatest!’—Molly was swinging the gate backwards and forwards in a most disagreeable manner—‘it is a woman’s love!’

‘I thought you were never coming, Dolly!’ said Miss Gray, in her high-pitched, shrill voice, breaking in upon the charmed silence of Mr. Brackenbury’s avowal. ‘Good-night, Mr. Brackenbury — good-night!’ and she banged the gate to sharply upon Dorothy Piggott, and left him standing on the other side of the hedge.

What was the matter with Dorothy Piggott?

Molly asked herself the question as she sat opposite to her at prayers. A change had come over her since she left the Union, and her eyes had dreams in them instead of mathematics.

The mathematics were there, in the background—they could never be far away—and the dreams, too.

She walked upstairs beside Molly in silence;

and when she got into her room, she closed the door after her sharply, and, with a little cry, threw herself in Molly's arms.

'Oh, Molly, he loves me!' she whispered; and then she hid her face on her shoulder.

The Great Enchanter had touched her with his magic wand; and when she looked up again, after that shy confession, the fashion of her countenance was changed.

Could this be Dorothy Piggott? Why, she was soft-eyed and tearful, and her cheeks were glowing, and her lips trembled.

CHAPTER XIX.

TEMPTATION.

THERE were two letters on Jack's breakfast-table the morning after the debate at the Union. The handwriting of both was familiar. He turned them over reluctantly, and paused before he opened them.

He opened the one that bore the old familiar Silverton post-mark. It was from his father. He hadn't written to him since he had been up. The girls had written, and said all that was to be said, and Jack had nothing to write about.

There was not a word of complaint on the four closely written pages. Very little

happened by any chance at Silverton ; but the Rector covered four pages easily, and signed his name on the other side—a good, flourishing signature, that sprawled across the page.

There was very little to tell. Only the old home news: the ‘old lady’ had just had a fine litter ; the college rick was in splendid condition ; Merrylegs had fallen lame. It was a very humdrum letter—a fond, proud, foolish letter ; from the first word to the last it breathed nothing but love and trust—unbounded trust.

Jack’s gloomy face flushed as he read the letter, and he put it down with a sigh. A little shiver ran up his back-bone as he opened the other letter, and read it through with a lowering brow and his lips set hard.

It was not a nice letter to read, though it was signed ‘A Friend.’

Jack crushed it up in his hand, and went

over with it to Mr. Brackenbury's rooms on the other side of the quad.

Mr. Brackenbury wasn't up. His breakfast was laid, and his kettle was singing on the hob, and a big fire was blazing up his chimney. Mr. Brackenbury always had a good fire; the college supplied him with coals, and he used them liberally.

'Hullo!' said Jack, hammering at his door; 'aren't you up yet? Here's a confounded letter from that cursed money-lender.'

'Money - lender be hanged!' said Mr. Brackenbury.

'I wish he were!' said Jack ruefully. 'But I say, Brackenbury, do get up. I'm in an awful funk. I can't eat any breakfast till you've read it.'

'All right, old man; have breakfast with me. I'll tumble out directly. You don't mind waiting?'

'No,' said Jack sullenly; 'I'll wait.'

He sat down in Mr. Brackenbury's arm-chair, before Mr. Brackenbury's roaring fire, and looked round the room.

He had been in the room hundreds of times before; but he had never looked round it with the same interest that he looked round now.

It was the top room of the staircase; it was an attic, and it looked out upon the leads.

Smiler, the college Tom, was looking in; he generally looked in when he passed on his morning rounds; and if the window happened to be open, he came in and helped himself to whatever might be in the way—hence his name, Smiler, diminutive of Smiles, illustrating Self-Help in the most practical way.

The window was shut, so Smiler only looked in, and went his way.

It might have been an æsthetic room if it had been in anything like order.

There were rugs and cushions lying about on the floor, and on the couch, which was a

very magnificent affair, covered with Persian saddle-bags, and all sorts of bric-à-brac tossed about the room. There were high-art chairs and five-o'clock-tea tables, and old armour, and some formidable weapons that looked very much like Wardour Street; and foils and boxing-gloves, and tennis-racquets, lying in a confused heap in a corner ; but there were no books visible.

Mr. Brackenbury had collected all this costly lumber during his three years' residence, and all the time he had been going to arrange it about his room. It was to be a high-art room ; it had never been arranged ; it was still lying on the floor—and none of it was paid for.

Mr. Brackenbury made a hasty toilet, and came in presently, arrayed in a gorgeous dressing-gown, and with his long black hair, still wet from the bath, falling over his eyes.

He nodded to Jack, threw open the window

that looked out on the leads for Smiler to come in, and took up the letters that were lying on his breakfast-table. There was quite a heap of letters : some in blue envelopes, some in white, lengthwise envelopes with impressions on the seals. Mr. Brackenbury took them up, one by one, and where the superscription was not familiar, he referred to the legend on the seal; and when he had gone through the heap, he stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze and dropped them into the flame one by one, with a smile of satisfaction on his pensive face.

There was one letter in the heap which he did not consign to the flames, a little letter in a pink envelope, with a dainty monogram on the seal. It was addressed in a scrawly, angular, feminine hand; but it smelt nicely.

He pushed it aside, unopened, and turned to Jack.

‘Well, old man,’ he said airily; ‘and how about Beelzebub?’

‘He won’t renew,’ said Jack gloomily. ‘He threatens proceedings if the money isn’t paid in a week.’

‘He knows better than that,’ said Mr. Brackenbury with a laugh, chipping his egg; ‘he’s only trying to frighten you. Leave him to me; I’ll answer him.’

Jack took the letter that was troubling him carefully out of the envelope, and spread it open before Brackenbury. His hand trembled as he held it, and his face was very white.

Mr. Brackenbury took it up daintily between his finger and thumb, and read it through with a smile. When he had finished it, he proceeded to hold it over the fire, as he had held the others; but the flame had died out, and it only scorched it.

‘Good God! Brackenbury, you wouldn’t burn it?’ said Jack, rescuing the scorched epistle. ‘Do be serious; I’m in an awful funk about it!’

‘All right, old man; make your mind easy. Beelzebub knows what he’s about; he only wants to squeeze out a little more interest. He’ll wait as long as you like, if you humour him. He only wants another name at the back of the bill.’

‘Another name; that’s it!’ groaned Jack. ‘He’s got yours and mine; and now he wants another. As if I could ask another fellow to put his name to that confounded bill.’

‘It would be just the same if you did, old man,’ said Mr. Brackenbury dryly. ‘“A Friend” is too well known in Cambridge for anyone to put his name to the back of his paper. Leave him to me, and I’ll threaten him with laying the matter before the tutor if he doesn’t come to terms.’

Jack was quite willing to leave the matter in Mr. Brackenbury’s hands; and he went down the narrow twisty staircase with a dis-

tinct feeling of relief, and beguiled the tedium of the morning by tubbing freshmen.

There was a lecture he ought to have attended, and he had really made up his mind to work this term; but who could work after such a letter?

Two mornings after this event Mr. Brackenbury called upon him. He called so early that Jack was not up. He had been to a smoking concert the night before, and the songs or the smoke or the wine had got into his head, and Mr. Brackenbury had to knock at his bedroom door several times before he could rouse him.

‘Hullo, old man! aren’t you up?’ shouted Mr. Brackenbury cheerfully, beating upon his door.

The songs or the smoke were still in Jack’s head, and he made a surly rejoinder that was not at all articulate.

‘Ah, I see!’ said Brackenbury; ‘you were

working too late last night, I'll be bound. Depend upon it, it's a mistake—always gives you a headache in the morning.'

Jack was growling inarticulately under the clothes. The songs of the previous night were still running in his head, and getting mixed up with the mocking voice at his door. The refrain of a comic song was ringing in his ears, and kept time to Mr. Brackenbury's blows on his bedroom door—

'Oh! oh! listen to me tale o' woe!'

He felt too drowsy and dull and indifferent to get up, and he attempted a feeble expostulation.

'I'm awfully sorry to disturb you, Jack,' said Mr. Brackenbury through the door; 'but I think you must get up. There's a letter from that infernal Beelzebub, and he's sent down a messenger to wait for an answer.'

'Oh, hang it!' groaned Jack; 'if you'll wait a minute I'll tumble out.'

'All right, I'll wait; only don't be long,

because the fellow's waiting outside, and he looks uncommonly like a sheriff's officer.'

While Jack was tumbling out—and he tumbled out as fast as he could after that cheerful piece of information—Mr. Brackenbury amused himself by tossing over the papers that were lying open on his writing-table.

Jack had been honestly working for a couple of hours the day before, and his papers were strewn all over the table. Beneath them was a pile of suspicious-looking epistles, of a familiar shape, which he had taken the trouble to keep together with an elastic band. Mr. Brackenbury would have put them in the fire. As he tossed the papers aside, he saw an open letter beneath them that arrested his attention. It was the Rector's letter, that Jack had received two days ago. Mr. Brackenbury was too honourable to read his friend's letters—it would have been just as well if he had—but he examined the signature curiously.

He was still examining it when Jack came in. He was looking pale and limp, and wretchedly soddened and dejected, and his eyes were bloodshot. He had a furious headache ; evidently smoking concerts did not agree with him.

‘ Well ! ’ he said in a ghastly voice, flinging himself into a chair, ‘ so the fellow’s come ? ’

‘ Easy, dear boy—easy ! Mr. Friend has not done us the honour of coming in person : he has sent a deputy.’

‘ Has he got a writ ? He threatened to take out a writ,’ gasped Jack, a trifle whiter than his yesterday’s linen that he had put on in his haste.

‘ I can’t say what he has got in his bag ; but we’ll have him in and question him, if you like.’

Mr. Brackenbury went over to the window and pointed out a seedy-looking man, of decidedly Jewish aspect, who was walking

up and down the quad, in front of their particular staircase, with his eye upon it in a manner that was unpleasant and suggestive.

The sight of him sent a shiver up Jack's spine, and he shrank back from the window with an expression of gloom and despair on his pale, unshaven face.

'For Heaven's sake don't let the fellow come in here!' he said, sitting down in the first chair he came to, which happened to be at his writing-table, and burying his face in his hands, as if to shut out the unpleasant sight. 'My nerves are so shaken—I've been so upset lately by that infernal bill—that I couldn't stand it. Whatever we've got to do, let us do, but don't call the fellow in.'

'Just as you like,' said Mr. Brackenbury; 'fortunately we haven't very much to do—we have only to add another signature to this little document. Beelzebub has been so

obliging as to put a cross where : the only question is, whose signature shall we put ?

Jack looked up nervously. His head was swimming and confused, and aching dreadfully, and there was that ridiculous refrain that was haunting him, beating time to the man's footsteps on the stones outside :

‘ Oh, oh ! listen to me tale o’ woe !’

‘ Whose signature ?’ he repeated feebly, and he turned the narrow strip of paper that Mr. Brackenbury spread out before him over with his finger and thumb. He tried to read it, but his head was so confused that he could make nothing of it—only that the sum it represented was five hundred pounds instead of three hundred as formerly.

‘ He’s tacked on the interest, you see,’ Mr. Brackenbury explained. ‘ He’s willing to renew for three months if someone else’ll sign it. It doesn’t matter who ; it’s only a

form. It's one of their dodges to get as many names as they can.'

'Who can you ask?—who'd be likely?'

'I shouldn't ask anyone. It wouldn't do to let this little transaction get wind. We must put down a name; any name will do.'

'Any name?' Jack repeated with feeble wonder.

'Yes; any name will do. Your governor's would do capitally.'

'My governor's? He wouldn't sign it for the world.'

'I don't suppose he would,' said Mr. Brackenbury with a laugh. 'You can save him the trouble: you'll sign it for him.'

'I!' Jack gasped. He wasn't sure of Mr. Brackenbury's meaning, but his face slowly whitened.

'Yes, you! It's a capital signature, and very easy to copy—those flourishes are

splendid!' And he took up the old Rector's letter, and spread it out before Jack.

'I couldn't do it—I wouldn't do it for the world!' he gasped, and he covered his face with his hands to shut out the dear familiar writing of that generous father who had never refused him anything in his life.

He could not shut out the homely details of that fond, simple letter: he remembered them at that moment with a sickening sense of humiliation—the college rick, and the 'old lady' who was contributing so handsomely towards his expenses. There was not a word in the letter that Mr. Brackenbury spread out before him that was not burnt into his brain.

'Nonsense, old man; the governor need never know. It's only a form—a mere matter of convenience. I'd sign my mother's name with all my heart, but a woman's name won't do.'

‘I can’t do it, Brackenbury; don’t ask me. It’s—it’s *forgery!*’

‘Forgery be hanged ! It’s your own name as well as his. It’s a thing that’s done every day. I’ve signed my mother’s name hundreds of times.’

‘Not without her permission!’

‘Oh, I generally got it after!’ said Mr. Brackenbury with a laugh.

‘I’d rather not do it if there’s any other way,’ said Jack nervously.

‘There isn’t any other way, unless Mr. Benjamin, outside, has another way in his bag. We’ll ask him, if you like; but I fancy it will not be so easy a way as this, and not so agreeable. Now then, old man, the writing is uncommonly like yours, only a few more flourishes. Here, try it on this;’ and Mr. Brackenbury found a blank sheet of paper and put it before him.

Jack pushed it aside, with a very naughty word.

‘Oh, Brackenbury!’ he said with a little catch in his throat, ‘don’t ask me! You don’t know how generous the dear old governor has been to me. Oh, it would be too bad—anything but that!’

There were tears in his blue eyes, and his lips were quivering.

‘*I* don’t ask you,’ said Mr. Brackenbury loftily. ‘I only advise you for your own good. If you will not be advised, you must take the consequences. I’m afraid there is but one alternative—a disgustingly brutal one. Mr. Benjamin has a writ in his bag.’

‘A writ! O God! has it come to that?’

Jack didn’t exactly know what a writ meant. To his unaccustomed ears it sounded like a death-warrant. A gaol and a social scaffold loomed before him; and all this time

the footsteps of the man outside were beating out that ridiculous refrain :

‘ Oh, oh ! listen to me tale o’ woe !’

‘ Give me the paper,’ he said hoarsely; and he seized a pen and scrawled the familiar signature over it, and with fierce impatience covered it from side to side with the old Rector’s erratic flourishes.

He wrote it offhand in a few seconds; but if he had copied it carefully, stroke by stroke, and taken hours over it, he could not have reproduced it more faithfully.

CHAPTER XX.

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL.

‘ And heard once more in college fanes
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder music rolling shake
The prophet blazon’d on the panes.’

MOLLY had not had five minutes alone with her lover since she came up. She had only shaken hands with him before at least a dozen people, and she had sat beside him in King’s Chapel, and had walked back with him to her aunt’s through King’s Parade.

There are not many opportunities for the exchange of tender confidences at King’s Chapel. The organ is not long silent, and the congregation is always bobbing up and

down, and the Argus-eyed undergraduates are always modestly observant.

The Junior Dean usually stared at the windows. He ought to have known them pretty well by this time ; he had been staring at them Sunday after Sunday ever since he first came up.

Molly didn't care for the windows. She never could make anything of them. It was a great deal too much trouble to find out what they meant. The quaint old figures were hideous and repulsive, and the subjects were all painful—sorrow and loss, shame and suffering.

Oh! they were very unpleasant windows and ridiculously over-rated.

At least, Molly thought so as she sat beside her lover, who was never tired of staring at them.

She preferred to enjoy the music and the delightful singing, and the admiration of the

observant undergraduates opposite, to troubling herself about Mary Magdalene in that hideous window.

On the second Sunday that she walked back with the Junior Dean she suddenly remembered a passage in his letters, his holiday letters written from Llanberys. The singing of a sweet-voiced chorister had brought it to her mind.

‘What has become of the voice, Keith, that you raved about at Llanberys?’ she asked him quite audibly when they were in the middle of the ante-chapel.

‘The voice?’ replied the Junior Dean, turning dreadfully red—but that might be owing to the windows: one turns all sorts of trying colours in King’s Chapel.

‘Yes; the beautiful voice you were always raving about. It was a woman’s voice, I think you said?’

‘Y-e-e-s,’ said the Junior Dean absently.

He had been looking up so long at that Magdalene window that he was quite confused, and couldn't bring his mind down suddenly to a lower level. 'Oh yes ; it—it was a female voice.'

'It was in the village choir, I suppose ?'

'N-o-o, it wasn't in the choir. At least, it sang in the church, and—and helped the choir. It was a very beautiful voice. It sang hymns beautifully.'

'Did it only sing hymns ?'

'Oh yes ; she sang operatic things, and songs at concerts.'

'A public singer ? I didn't understand the—the woman was a public singer.'

Molly hadn't a sweet voice. It was always high—quick, and bright like her face—and sometimes it was disagreeable. It was particularly unpleasant now.

'She used to sing at a theatre once ; but she has left the stage, the—the singing in operas,

I mean. She will only sing at sacred concerts and oratorios now.'

'What has she left the stage for?' said Molly abruptly, in her very sharpest voice; 'is she too old and too ugly to sing there any longer?'

'Dear me, no! She is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, and she is quite young,' the Junior Dean hastened to say; and then he turned as red as a peony, and looked with his absent eyes at the fine view down King's Parade.

'Oh!' said Molly.

Some people manage to convey a great deal of meaning in one word, generally a monosyllable.

'Yes,' said the Junior Dean presently—Molly was walking so fast that it was difficult with his lame foot to keep up with her—'yes,' he said breathlessly; 'and—and—she has been very unfortunate.'

‘Oh!’ said Molly coldly, still racing on. She didn’t give him any encouragement as he panted on beside her, but he had broken the ice, and that was something.

‘I—I thought you might be interested in her. Her story is a most painful one, and deeply interesting.’

‘Indeed!’

Molly was some paces ahead of him now, and he could not very well shout after her down King’s Parade Middle. Rose De l’Orme’s interesting story—or as much as she had chosen to tell him of it. He had to content himself with repeating the last sentence with little gasps between.

‘Deeply—in-teresting——’

Molly walked a few paces in front of her lover the rest of the way until they reached her aunt’s house. She gave him no further opportunity of dwelling upon the misfortunes of the beautiful voice. She even pretended

not to hear when he caught her up at the gate, and they waited on the steps for the door to be opened.

‘I am sure you would be interested in her story,’ he said a little breathlessly; ‘it is such a sad story. She is so young and beautiful, and has been so unfortunate.’

Adela was in the drawing-room making tea for her aunt when they came in.

‘Dear me!’ she said, in her delightful way, ‘you are both quite out of breath. Have you been running races?’

Her future brother-in-law assured her he had not been running races down King’s Parade, while Molly looked coldly on.

‘I suppose you have been to see the new house?’ she suggested, as she put him a very small lump of sugar in his tea—she knew he liked a big one. ‘The dear little house Molly has been raving about all through the vac.’

The Junior Dean blushed guiltily.

‘No,’ he said, hanging his head ; ‘we haven’t been to see the house. In fact, we haven’t found a house that will suit us yet ;’ and he looked towards Molly, who kept her face cruelly averted.

‘There’s one to let in the West Road’

‘Oh, that’s much too big for us. We want quite a little house—to begin with.’

Again he looked towards Molly, who still kept her face turned away.

‘I thought Molly had set her heart upon it. I heard her planning the furniture of the bow-windowed room. She’s painting a crock to stand in the window—she’s painting the St. Stephen’s arms on it. But perhaps I shouldn’t tell you : it may be intended for a surprise.’

Again Molly’s lover looked appealingly at her across the tea-table, but Molly kept her face averted, as if she could not bear to look at him.

‘I will inquire about the house,’ he said meekly. ‘I will go over it to-morrow. I’m afraid it is too big for us. It will cost a great deal to furnish.’

He was thinking of that hundred pounds that had melted away at Llanberys, and of a good many pounds that had been set aside for the purpose nearest his heart that had melted away since, and he sighed audibly.

Molly looked round sharply. She had a very disagreeable way of looking straight at you with those piercing blue eyes of hers, which were like naked sword-blades.

She looked straight at her lover, and he blushed furiously.

He was such a very bad hand at a deception, and he thought she could read the story of the hundred pounds that was gone irrevocably in his guilty face.

Oh, if she would only let him explain ! If Adela and her aunt—no, he wouldn’t have

mind her aunt—but if Adela had not been there he would have told her all.

He couldn't tell Adela about Rosey and her misfortunes, and her interesting conversion. It would be all over Newnham the next day. Everybody would laugh at him for parting so easily with his money, and call him Quixotic. He didn't mind the Quixotism, but he had a cowardly dread of being laughed at.

'It isn't at all a large house inside,' said Molly icily. 'It is all front. It is a corner house, and there's nothing behind; and the rent is very low. But perhaps you don't care about the situation.'

'The situation is very nice,' said the Junior Dean; but his voice was constrained, and he sighed again.

It was very unfortunate that he sighed at this very moment, for Molly was looking at him with her sharp questioning eyes, and there was uncomfortable silence in the room.

He felt so guilty and miserable that he scalded himself dreadfully in trying to appear at his ease, and was more uncomfortable than ever.

‘I’ll go over the house to-morrow with Molly,’ said Mrs. Gray, ‘and then we’ll tell you all about it. When would you want it, if we can get the landlord to keep it open? Houses are so soon snapped up in Cambridge, that you’ll have to decide at once if it suits.’

‘Not, I think, until next term,’ said the Junior Dean meekly. His voice faltered, and his manner was not at all that of an ardent lover.

‘Of course not until next term,’ interrupted Molly sharply, ‘if then. There is a lot to get ready.’

Keith Fellowes did not remonstrate; in fact, he seemed relieved at the prospect of the postponement of his happiness.

‘I am quite sure the landlord won’t keep the house. You will have to decide about it,

and pay the rent whether you occupy it or not,' said Mrs. Gray.

'I should think it would be a very good way,' said Adela sweetly; 'then you could furnish it by degrees. Molly has got her eye on a lot of curtains and chairs, and she has bespoken a lovely Persian rug. If you take the house, the things can be sent there; you can't expect tradespeople to keep them for you.'

The Junior Dean didn't groan aloud. 'N—o—o,' he faltered, 'I suppose not. I will go round and look at the house to-morrow, and if you like it'—and he turned to Molly with a little catch in his voice—'I will go and see the landlord.'

'There is no need to hurry,' said Molly in her iciest tone.

'Oh yes, there is,' Mrs. Gray broke in; 'if you don't decide at once you will lose the house. I will go about it to-morrow, and if

you take it we can begin furnishing directly. What a busy time we shall have !

‘ You are very kind,’ said the Junior Dean ; but his voice was constrained, and his lips were twitching nervously.

‘ Not at all. I shall enjoy it : I am very fond of shopping. It is fortunate for Molly that she has an old housekeeper like me to advise her. She would fritter away that hundred pounds you have saved for her in all sorts of useless things if she hadn’t someone with experience to advise her.’

That hundred pounds !

‘ I shall be late for chapel,’ said the Junior Dean, getting up hurriedly, and picking up his cap off the floor ; and he said ‘ Good-bye ’ with a frightened look in his eyes.

‘ I—I will come over to-morrow, Mrs. Gray, and hear what you think about the house,’ he said as he went out, but he hadn’t the courage to look Molly in the face.

‘What is the matter with Keith?’ Adela asked in her downright unpleasant way. ‘Have you been quarrelling? He looked positively ghastly when you talked about taking the house.’

‘He is overworked and worn out with all his lectures and pupils,’ said Molly stoutly, defending her lover. ‘He has had no holiday. He has been working like a horse during the vac., at that nasty, vulgar watering-place, instead of taking a rest. Oh, why did I ever let him go there?’

Though she took his part, the tears were smarting in Molly’s eyes. She brushed them away hurriedly; she would not have let Adela see them for the world.

When she got back to Newnham, she ran upstairs to her own room, past all the girls who were loitering about the stairs and landings, with their things on, ready to start for church, without seeing one of them. She

even passed Dorothy Piggott with that hard, unrecognising look in her eyes ; and when she reached her room she shut her door and bolted it, and sat down on a little low chair, with her face to the wall, and had a good cry.

‘ Oh, Keith ! Keith ! you love me no longer ! You love that nasty singing woman with the beautiful voice ! ’ she moaned ; and when she got up from that low chair and looked in the glass, her eyes were a sight to see.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEAR LITTLE HOUSE.

THE Junior Dean was only just in time for his college chapel. The Dean was absent, and he had to take the service. The men who sat on the opposite benches, and could see him in his high seat between the two candles, that only made the darkness around him a little more visible, remarked that he was more absent and preoccupied than usual.

He got both his hands, somehow, inside his surplice, and was performing some kind of dumb-show underneath it, sticking out his thumbs beneath it in an idiotic manner. Then he rolled up carefully the long ribbon

markers in the big Prayer-book before him, as he was accustomed to roll up the ribbons in his gown. Finally he took his chin in his hand and stroked it affectionately, feeling carefully for a stray whisker.

He went through the service, and he performed all these ridiculous tricks, mechanically. All the time his lips were repeating the familiar words and his fingers were going through this idiotic dumb-show, his mind was far away.

He was thinking about Rosey—he had one of her little scented pink notes in his pocket, under his surplice—and he was worrying himself about the house, and he was wondering how he should tell Molly about that hundred pounds.

He went back to his rooms directly after chapel with that same absent look in his eyes as on the day when Molly sent him that dear little letter.

He lighted his candles and carefully adjusted the shades and sat down to his writing-table. He took from his pocket the pink letter that had been under his surplice all through the service—but he did not thank God for it.

He opened the letter and read it with a heightened colour and his lip twitching nervously; and an upright line, which had not been there before, came out in his forehead. He laid the letter down with a sigh.

Rosey wanted some more money. She wanted fifty pounds. She had got an engagement at last—a very satisfactory engagement with a most respectable company. She would only sing at concerts—the very best concerts—and she would only sing carefully-selected songs. But, alas ! she had no fitting wardrobe to appear in public in, and the landlady at Llanberys had pawned all her trinkets.

She would have to redeem them and buy some gowns. The very least sum that would

enable her to do this was fifty pounds. She could not accept the engagement without it.

She was so sorry, oh, so sorry ! to make these repeated calls upon her best friend—her benefactor. But what could a poor girl do who had turned over a new leaf, and was steadfastly purposed to lead a wholly reformed and irreproachable life?

Rosey's grief was no doubt genuine ; she made her little humble request for this small sum—to buy gowns and trinkets—very artlessly, and though she spelt dreadfully, she had a pretty caressing way with her that the Junior Dean found it hard to resist.

It was only fifty pounds !

If he refused her this little sum she would have to give up her engagement. Gowns and trinkets, he argued, were a necessary equipment—a public singer's stock-in-trade, as it were. She couldn't possibly sing in dowdy gowns, and—and without necklaces.

‘Yes,’ he murmured with a sigh; ‘I—I must let her have the money. She is friendless and alone; she has no one else to ask. If by this timely help she can be put in the right road, I am sure it is my duty to make any sacrifice. But what can I say to Molly about the house?’

The Junior Dean did his duty according to his lights, but his conscience pricked him all the time he was doing it. He wrote a cheque on a Sunday. He never on principle wrote business letters on a Sunday, and he had never written a cheque on that day in his life.

He felt uncomfortable while he was writing it, and he sealed the letter with a distinct foreboding of evil. The matter was urgent—very urgent, Rosey wrote in her pitiful entreaty—or he would have cancelled it even then.

It must have been urgent, or she would not

have despatched another of those little pink notes on the same errand.

The postman delivered them at the same time, one on either side of the quad. Mr. Brackenbury didn't take his to chapel beneath his surplice. He lit his pipe with it in the early part of the day, and he wrote a reply to it later; but he did not send her a cheque.

He bewailed his inability to respond to her modest request, and he assured her in the most generous manner of the pleasure it would have afforded him, had it been possible, to have sent her double the modest sum she asked for. He told her in his airy way that his staircase was always crowded with duns, and that they often reached half-way across the quad. This statement was not wholly metaphorical.

The Junior Dean called on Mrs. Gray the next day to hear about the house.

If he had been going to execution he could not have gone more unwillingly. He looked dreadfully dejected when he was shown into the drawing-room. He had been praying in his heart all the way that Adela might not be there, and then he told himself he might find courage to explain his position.

His prayer was answered—Adela was not there; but Dorothy Piggott had come in her place.

Molly was herself again to-day, and her eyes were brighter than ever. They were not the least dimmed by yesterday's tears. She had read all his letters before she went to bed, every letter that she had ever received from him, and her eyes had grown brighter as she read.

There was really very little in them about the woman with the beautiful voice. He didn't even call her a beautiful woman: he only called her a voice. Molly had a good

deal of confidence in her glass, and it had reassured her. It had told her she had nothing to fear from a voice.

She took heart, and rallied herself on her foolish jealousy — her utterly groundless jealousy. But she took more trouble with her toilet the next day, when she went to look at the house, than she was accustomed to take since she had been at Newnham. She wore a well-fitting frock, and a becoming hat with a broad brim turned up coquettishly at the side, showing her delightful profile, and the dainty curve of her oval cheek and the dimple in her chin. She surveyed herself critically in the glass, and it gave back a most consoling reflection. She was perfectly satisfied with herself, even to her gloves, and she was prepared to be generous.

‘Oh, Keith!’ she said, when he came in with that dejected air, and his eyes troubled and absent, ‘the house is lovely—the very

thing we have been looking for! It is full of corners; the rooms are not the least formal. It will be delightful to furnish.'

'And it is not too large?' he faltered.

'Not a bit. We couldn't do with one smaller. There are only three rooms downstairs; all with big bow-windows, and all looking different ways. Oh, such lovely rooms!'

'Three sitting-rooms,' he repeated feebly; 'isn't that rather too many to—to begin with?'

'We couldn't do with less,' said Molly severely—'a library for you, and a drawing and dining room; of course we couldn't do with less.'

'And upstairs?'

'Oh, there are three rooms upstairs, and a dressing-room, and three or four attics above.'

'Eight rooms upstairs!' the Junior-Dean gasped feebly.

He had pictured a close little nest, with,

say, three rooms, and jessamine over the door and a rose looking in at the window, and a pair of swallows twittering on the roof. He couldn't grasp all at once the idea of this formidable corner house with bow-windows all over the front; but, then, his taste was not æsthetic.

'You will want it bigger by-and-by,' Mrs. Gray explained; 'it is better to take a house big enough than to have to keep on moving.'

'Yes,' said the Junior Dean, growing hot; 'oh yes, certainly.'

'And the rent is very low for Cambridge. The only thing is, you will have to take it from the half-quarter. The landlord will not keep it any longer. If you put any things in it, you must have a person there to keep it aired; but then you will have the advantage of furnishing it gradually.'

'Yes,' said the Junior Dean, and he looked over at Molly.

‘Oh, Keith, you mustn’t let it go!’ she said; and then she brought him over the sugar-basin, and sat down beside him while he drank his tea. ‘We shall never have such a chance again. I have quite set my heart upon it. And there is that hundred pounds: I have planned exactly how to spend it.’ She took from her pocket a little note-book. It looked as if she had been using it at lectures, for the corners were untidy and it was scribbled all over. ‘There,’ she said, opening it before his eyes, and running her fingers down the closely-written columns, ‘those are the kitchen things. I have copied it all from the store-lists; we shall get them at store prices. And these are the carpets and curtains, and chairs for the drawing-room. I think we shall quite manage the drawing-room out of the hundred pounds; but we shall want a little more for the dining-room—and upstairs.’

All this for a hundred pounds, when Rosey had wanted fifty for only gowns and trinkets!

Molly's eyes were so bright, and she was so radiantly lovely in her happy confidence, that he could have taken her in his arms and worshipped her for her love and trust in him. He hadn't the heart to tell her that the hundred pounds was gone long ago, and that only last night he had sent away the remaining fifty pounds that he had set aside for furnishing the dear little house.

'Dear me!' he said weakly, 'I had no idea that a hundred pounds would go so far;' and then he put his hands in his empty pockets and sighed. He was thinking what a little way a hundred and fifty pounds had gone with Rosey.

'You will go and see the house, dear?' said Molly.

She couldn't say it softly and caressingly like Rosey, but she said it very nicely. Her

voice was a higher pitch than most women's; but her lover thought at the moment it was the sweetest voice he had ever heard.

‘We will go together,’ he said desperately; ‘and—and if you like it we will take it.’

He couldn't look into her eyes as of old. He was afraid to meet them now. He was quite sure she would find out about that hundred pounds if he ventured to look at her.

It was all settled the next day.

Mrs. Gray went with them to look over the house. It was a gray November day, and the skies were leaden, and a couple of lime-trees at the gate were shivering in the chill, damp air, and dropping their leaves mournfully at his feet, as the Junior Dean stood on the path and looked up at the house—the dear little house where he was to take his bride.

There was no jessamine over the porch, and there was no rose-tree round the window, and

the swallows had all flown away long ago. There was a bill, 'House to Let,' in one of the gaunt bow-windows, and a Venetian blind with a broken cord was drawn up in another, and hung down all aslant in a forlorn, neglected fashion.

The first sight of the house was very depressing, but it was nothing to the inside.

The Junior Dean had never been over an empty house before, and the sight of the bare rooms, where people had lately lived, and perhaps died, and the litter they had left behind them in the hurry of their departure, gave him quite a shiver.

Three gaunt bare front rooms, all windows, looking out on the shivering trees and the dull, uninteresting street. Oh, it was dreadful !

He didn't want to go upstairs ; but Molly led him unresisting down through the basement, and showed him the kitchens. It was

like going down into a vault. A nasty uncomfortable feeling possessed him, that he had died upstairs and had come down there to be buried.

He hurried away as fast as he could, and Molly followed him, explaining the alterations and improvements she was going to make, leaving Mrs. Gray poking about among the sinks and the cellars.

‘It’s quite perfect, isn’t it, Keith?’ she said, when they had got back to the drawing-room, where the broken Venetian blind was sloping down.

‘It seems a very nice house,’ he said with a shiver.

He could say nothing else, looking at her eager face and her beautiful bright eyes. He hadn’t the heart to tell her that he hated it, that he hadn’t got the money to furnish it. He was weak, and cowardly beyond contempt. He hadn’t the courage to tell the woman he

loved the story of his weakness and folly, and throw himself on her generosity.

Oh, the pity of it !

‘It’s quite a lovely house ! If we waited years we should find nothing to suit us so well, and we can begin furnishing it at once. We will make Aunt Gray the treasurer. You shall give her the hundred pounds—the dear little hundred pounds that you’ve been working so hard for, Keith—and she shall pay all the bills. It will make her think she is doing something. It will keep her from interfering with the drawing-room. I wouldn’t have curtains and carpets of her choosing for the world !’

‘No, dear,’ said the Junior Dean nervously—he felt that at this point he should have taken her in his arms, he had a convenient opportunity: the Venetian blind was half down, and Mrs. Gray still tarried in the region of the sinks, and he hadn’t taken her

in his arms since he had returned from Llanberys ; Molly evidently expected it, and she looked a little hurt because he didn't— 'no, dear,' he said in that flurried, nervous manner that was growing upon him; 'you must choose everything according to your own taste.'

'And you?' she said sweetly; 'I should like you to be pleased, Keith—dear——'

The lovely oval face was never lovelier than when she looked up with her sweet eyes unusually tender into his. He thought he had never seen such a delightful profile in his life. Her eyes were only dark beneath with the shadow of the long brown lashes, and the pretty dusky red of health was in her cheeks. She wasn't so soft and caressing as Rosey, but there was a breezy freshness about Molly that was as stimulating as a tonic—and much more agreeable.

'My darling!' he said with a faltering

voice, and his troubled, absent eyes grew humid as he looked at her—‘my darling, I shall be quite satisfied if you are. I hope you will be very happy here. God knows I will do all in my power to make your life a happy one. I can never—never thank Him sufficiently for the great gift He has given me. God bless you, Molly! I hope you will never, never have cause to regret the confidence you have placed in me.’

He was thinking about that hundred pounds.

‘Of course not!’ said Molly stoutly.

And then, perhaps she put her face up to his—he found it very near to his shoulder, and the dainty chin upraised, and the red, red lips——

But he didn’t kiss her lips. He kissed her forehead with that old-fashioned, reverent chivalry he was wont to show in his manner towards women.

He had kissed Rosey's once in the same manner.

Mrs. Gray came in while he was kissing her, and she looked quite shocked, and the Junior Dean blushed furiously.

He might have been kissing her all the time by his blushes.

CHAPTER XXII.

GUY FAWKES AT ST. STEPHEN'S.

It was all settled, and the house was taken, and the chairs and the rugs that Molly had bought were being sent in.

Of course they had to be paid for, and the Junior Dean had promised to send Mrs. Gray—who had kindly undertaken the office of treasurer—the hundred pounds.

He sat in his lonely bachelor room, like the king in the old nursery rhyme, counting out his money. It didn't take him long to count. He counted it several times over, but it rather diminished than grew in the process. Add up the columns of his bank-book as he would, he

couldn't make out more than sixty pounds standing to his credit.

He was forty pounds short !

He was not accustomed to financial embarrassments, and he had never had occasion to borrow any money in his life. 'A Friend' had written to him with his tempting offers of pecuniary aid in vain in his undergraduate days.

If he would only write to him now !

He would have to borrow the forty pounds ; he could repay it at Christmas, when the money from his fellowship and his pupils would be coming in.

He was rather ashamed to borrow money, just as it was known all over Cambridge that he had taken a house and was going to be married.

He knew the senior tutor of his college would lend him whatever sum he wanted, but he would be sure to make certain inquiries.

He went over to Mr. Flynt's rooms after Hall.

It happened to be Guy Fawkes' Night. He didn't know it until he crossed the quad and a cracker exploded in a most suspicious way at his heels, and followed in his wake till he turned in at Mr. Flynt's staircase.

He couldn't see who threw the cracker ; there were an unusual number of black figures hurrying through the quad. It was a foggy night, and they appeared suddenly and vanished in the mist in quite a ghostly way.

He had too much personal dignity to make any fuss about it, and he groped his way to Mr. Flynt's doorway, and stumbled up his dimly lighted staircase. On his way he met a couple of undergraduates coming downstairs with a packing-case and a bundle of fire-lighters in their hands.

They made an attempt to conceal them, but he passed by unnoticing. He had more

important matters on hand ; but the unusual incident, on such a night, might have excited suspicion in the breast of the most absent-minded of dons.

The senior tutor was reading when Keith Fellowes entered. He looked up with an impatient 'Come in !' when he heard the feeble, spiritless knock at his door.

The Junior Dean came in, as most men do when they go on that pleasing errand, with a certain diffidence in his manner ; and he had to clear his throat with a preliminary cough before he found courage to begin.

He took the seat Mr. Flynt pushed towards him, and sat looking absently in the fire.

He hadn't been in those rooms since the night when the senior tutor declined to assist him in finding a 'position' for Rosey.

'So you've taken a house, I hear?' said Mr. Flynt.

'Ye—e—es. I have taken a very nice

little house, and—and we are beginning to furnish it.'

'So I hear. Gray was telling me about it. When are you going to be married?'

Most men turn red when this question is put to them in that blunt way—it is the correct thing to do—but the Junior Dean turned rosy red.

'Not until next term,' he said, twiddling the ribbons of his gown.

'No; I suppose not. In the vac., before you come up; you will be married at her father's place in Devonshire?'

'Yes, oh yes; but the date is not quite settled. We have to furnish the house—and—and that reminds me that I have come to ask you a favour. I want you to lend me some money.'

The senior tutor didn't whistle—only undergraduates whistle; but he sat perfectly silent and looked grave.

‘It is but a little matter ; about fifty or sixty pounds would do till the money from my pupils comes in at Christmas. It would be a great convenience to me. I—I don’t like to overdraw my account at the bank.’

‘Ah ! I see,’ said Mr. Flynt genially, a light suddenly breaking upon him. ‘You’ve got to pay for the furnishing—a very costly item in getting married. Costs more than you expected ? Invariably the case, I’m told. Delighted to help you, I’m sure. Have as much as you like, my dear fellow ; will sixty be enough ? Why not make it a hundred ?’

‘I—I think sixty will do, thank you,’ said the Junior Dean, with a little catch in his voice.

He didn’t like Mr. Flynt lending him the money under this impression—though it was not far from the truth ; it was like borrowing it under false pretences.

‘The fact is, the money I had set aside for

this purpose I have had to apply to—to another use, and I am short this amount.'

He faltered and stammered in making this innocent little statement, and blushed painfully.

Something in his manner and his halting voice struck the senior tutor, and he looked at him over his spectacles.

'By the way,' he inquired irrelevantly, and not at all in his usual genial voice, 'what has become of that other woman?'

'Rose—Mdlle. Rose De l'Orme? Oh, she has got an appointment—a very good appointment, I hear. She will sing only at first-class concerts. She does not need any—further—assistance.'

'Oh!' said the senior tutor, with a twinkle in his little bright eyes, 'that's where your money has gone!'

'I have been obliged—I could do no less—to let her have a small sum to—to enable her

to accept the engagement. She had parted, poor girl! with all her trinkets and gowns; the landlady—that I told you about, who had used her shamefully—had actually pawned them.'

'You—you don't mean to say, Fellowes, that you have been paying for this woman's gowns and trinkets with the money that was to have furnished the house you are preparing for—for your bride?' said the senior tutor, in quite an awful tone.

He didn't grasp the situation.

'I could do no less,' said the Junior Dean, his face visibly whitening under the tutor's words, and his lip quivering painfully. 'What I have done, God knows, I have done for the best. I have done what I believe to be my duty.'

'No doubt,' said Mr. Flynt dryly. 'You are not the first man that has been taken in by a designing woman. But in your case—'

engaged to that nice girl, on the point of being married—to get mixed up with an actress—a public singer: excuse me, Fellowes, but it's nothing short of madness !'

'No,' said the other sadly; 'I suppose the world would say so. Thank God! the world is not my master. I have done what I believe to be right. Feeling as I do, I could do no other. I should do it again to-morrow.'

'This is nothing short of madness,' said Mr. Flynt severely. 'Dear me, what a row those fellows are making in the quad!'

Here came a squib hissing and spluttering outside the window, and exploding on the ledge with a bang that nearly jumped the tutor out of his chair, accompanied by a roar of many voices in the quad beneath.

'This is, really, nothing short of madness, Fellowes. You have got some Quixotic notion in your head, and you persuade yourself that you are actuated by philanthropic

motives, and you squander your money upon a singing woman. You keep an actress, in fact; and you rob that nice girl--the nicest girl in Cambridge--that you are about to marry. I'm sure if Gray heard of it he would break off the match.'

'You don't understand,' said the Junior Dean nervously; 'indeed, you don't understand.'

'I understand perfectly,' said the tutor crushingly. 'What a terrible row there is in the quad! I—I really believe—they have got a bonfire.'

He went over to the window as he spoke, and he drew aside the blind and looked out. The fog had cleared a little, but the quadrangle beneath was full of smoke, and there was a lurid flame rising up from the middle of the grass, and dark forms were visible surrounding what looked like a martyr's pile. 'I'll go out presently, when it begins to burn

up, and I can identify the men better. That fellow Brackenbury, I believe, is at the bottom of it.'

'He's at the bottom of most things,' said the Junior Dean with a sigh, though he wasn't exactly thinking of Mr. Brackenbury.

'To return to what I was saying,' said the tutor, with a cloud on his troubled brow—he was listening, while he was speaking, to every sound in the quad without: 'it is nothing but sheer madness, your espousing the cause of this woman—and paying her debts. It is not only a very questionable proceeding, but it seems to me a breach of—of faith. There they go again!' and another projectile exploded on the sill of the window.

'The fact is, Fellowes, you are running a great risk. If the family hear of it, they will put an end to the engagement. Such a nice connection, too—a most desirable match. Her sister, I'm told—Miss Gray's sister, I mean—

is going to marry the Master of St. Margaret's.'

'Dr. Boulton? Dear me! I didn't know it was settled. He's old enough to be her father.'

'Nothing unusual—a mere matter of taste. She will take a very good place in the Tripos. I should not wonder, with his coaching, if she came out Senior Classic. It would be a most suitable match. He is the most polished classical scholar in the University. He could not do better.'

Mr. Flynt smiled, and for a moment he forgot the row outside, and the friendly lecture he was giving the Junior Dean, and he recalled a time when he coached a Girton girl himself, and something of the kind might have happened to him. He had let the opportunity slip, and the face that rose up before him was brightening another man's hearth now.

A terrific howl in the court outside recalled his attention, and the flame shot up in a lurid glare and illumined his room.

Were they going to burn down St. Stephen's?

'Excuse me, Fellowes,' he said hurriedly, putting on his gown and seizing his cap, 'I would rather not be mixed up with that woman. When you have quite washed your hands of her I shall be delighted to help you in any way I can.'

He went out and left the Junior Dean smarting under a sense of injustice, and feeling dreadfully humiliated—and he hadn't lent him the money.

The senior tutor stole quietly down the stairs.

They were making hay with a vengeance in the quad. A bonfire was blazing away in the middle of the sacred grass, and on the top of it, secured in his favourite arm-chair from

the neighbouring lecture-room, was—an effigy of himself.

There could be no doubt about the likeness. They had clothed the effigy in clerical habiliments, and arrayed it in an academical gown, and flattened a cap with a long tassel bobbing over its nose on its head.

Mr. Flynt's gray hair, and his big gray beard, and his shaggy gray eyebrows—all dreadfully exaggerated—and his blue spectacles, were all reproduced on this revolting figure. And the men were hurling crackers and squibs at it, and the quadrangle resounded with their fiendish shouts, or, rather, yells.

The senior tutor had no idea he was so unpopular, and his indignation knew no bounds. He shouted to the janitor at the gate to bring buckets and put out the fire, and he proceeded to take the names of the rioters.

This was not an easy thing to do. The

moment he appeared on the scene there was a *stampede* to the nearest staircases, and not a single undergraduate was to be seen on the grass.

Some innocent freshmen, not implicated in the bonfire business, spurred by patriotism, and desirous of seeing the blaze, opened their windows and looked out, and the tutor immediately put down their names.

While he was thus engaged, somebody hurled, with splendid precision, a cracker at him from one of the upper windows. It struck him on the breast, and exploded with disastrous effect in his beard.

To rush up the staircase to the room from which he saw it hurled was the work of a moment.

The door was sported!

He knocked imperatively at the door, as a don is empowered to do, without any result, and yet he was quite sure he heard voices

within. It was the door of Mr. Brackenbury's room.

He retired baffled, with threats not loud but deep, vowing vengeance on the author of the outrage.

The door might be sported, but he was pretty sure who threw the cracker.

As he emerged from the staircase, and was crossing the quad, he ran plump into the arms of an undergraduate who was coming from the opposite direction.

It was Mr. Brackenbury.

'I have just come from your rooms, sir,' blustered the tutor, 'and the door is sported.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Brackenbury coolly; 'I have just come in. I have the key in my pocket. Did you want to speak to me, sir?'

'I want to see what men are hiding away in your room, sir. Somebody has—has thrown a cracker at me!'

‘Dear me!’ said Mr. Brackenbury; ‘I thought I heard a row in the court.’

‘A row? There has been a disgraceful riot, sir! Some men will be sent down for this night’s proceedings. Will you go up before me and unlock your door?’

Mr. Brackenbury went up gaily, and opened the outer oak door with his key.

There were three men in the room, standing at the open window looking out into the quadrangle below, where the janitor was raking out the fire. One of them was a man who was going in for his Tripos—he ought to have known better than to be here; the other was a freshman who had lately come up—a smooth-faced, innocent-looking boy, who had just won a college scholarship.

The third man was Jack.

The tutor took down the names of these men.

‘If I do not find out who threw the

cracker, gentlemen,' said the tutor as he was leaving the room, 'you will all be sent down.'

There was a dead silence in the room, and the men looked blankly at each other.

Sent down!

The phrase has several meanings. It means very little to some men — only the indefinite lengthening of an unprofitable University career.

It meant a great deal to two of the men who stood here white and silent. It meant the blighting of a brilliant career to one—the loss of a front place in the Tripos—a false step on the threshold which could never be recovered.

It meant the loss of a well-earned college scholarship to the other—the disappointing of, oh, such fond hopes, such high ambitions!

The candidate for University honours turned pale, and his lip trembled, and he looked across the room at Mr. Brackenbury.

The scholar of St. Stephen's flushed deeply, and his boyish blue eyes filled with tears.

He was thinking of his mother, and the frustrating of all her dearest hopes.

He, too, looked at Mr. Brackenbury, but he couldn't see him through his tears.

Both men set their lips hard, and neither of them spoke.

Jack looked from one to the other, and last of all he looked at Mr. Brackenbury, who was standing in the doorway with that pensive smile upon his face. Jack's rugged face clouded, and his deep-set eyes, which were wonderfully like Molly's, emitted an angry gleam, which, had it been lightning instead of scorn, would have annihilated Mr. Brackenbury on the spot. The tutor's step was heard outside slowly descending the stairs.

'Stay, sir, a moment,' said Jack, in a firm voice; 'it was no fault of the others. *I* threw the firework.'

The tutor came hurriedly back into the room.

‘ You, sir ? ’ he said, fuming.

‘ Yes—I, sir ! ’ said Jack firmly.

Then the tutor did a very unworthy thing. A college don usually accepts an undergraduate’s word, but on this occasion a new formula was required.

‘ Mr. Brackenbury,’ said the tutor triumphantly, ‘ I call on you to bear witness that Mr. Gray has said that he threw the cracker. Remember, sir, that you are a witness.’

‘ There is no need for Mr. Brackenbury to bear witness,’ said Jack moodily. ‘ I repeat that I did it, and no one else is to blame.’

He wasn’t looking at the tutor as he spoke. He was looking at the widow’s son, who had so lately won the college scholarship, and whose eyes were brimming over with grateful tears.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOLLY GIVES HERSELF AIRS.

THERE was a meeting of the dons after chapel the next morning, and a great many men were fined, and some were gated.

Mr. Brackenbury's name was not among any of these.

There was some talk of sending Jack down. It was too serious a breach of—scarcely college discipline—college etiquette rather, to be met by either of the other remedies, and there was no precedent for it.

‘If I were only *quite* sure that he threw the cracker,’ said the tutor—he was cooler after a night's reflection—‘I would send Gray down ;

but I have a conviction that he did not throw it.'

'He owned to it!' said the Dean.

'Yes; he owned to it; but—I don't think he threw it.'

'It was very lucky for the others he did own to it,' said the Dean. 'It would have ruined Smith's chance in his Tripos if he had been sent down; and little Blantyre—it would have broken his mother's heart if he had lost his scholarship.'

'Perhaps he owned to it for their sakes,' said Jack's future brother-in-law, dreamily giving utterance to his thoughts in his absent way.

Perhaps he did.

They gave Jack the benefit of the doubt, and gated him for the remainder of the term.

The young scholar of St. Stephen's that Jack's frank avowal had saved from being 'sent down' kept on the opposite side of his

staircase. He had only come up in October, and his name, 'Blantyre,' was painted in white letters over his door. He and Jack were very close neighbours ; they had the basement all to themselves—and they kept a dog between them.

Blantyre, though dubbed a 'man,' was only a boy still—a fresh-faced, innocent boy, with all a boy's fondness for animals. He had kept guinea-pigs and rabbits not so long ago ; and there was a dovecote full of pigeons at home now, that was, oh ! so carefully tended for his sake.

His heart still hankered after these delightful furred and feathered things. He couldn't do without something to lick his hand, and to look up with undoubting animal faith into his eyes ; and he had brought up with him a dog : a dear little glossy fox-terrier, with a black nose and the tenderest eyes in the world—at least, to him.

There is a legend inscribed beneath every college gateway in Cambridge which every undergraduate's dog knows well, prohibiting dogs being brought within the walls of the colleges.

Blantyre had smuggled the dog unseen into his rooms, and he had kept him there. Jack, always fertile in resources, had settled the question at once. The bedrooms of both looked out into a lane at the back of the colleges, and the windows were only five or six feet from the ground. The dog had only to be accustomed to use this mode of ingress and egress, and to be carefully taught to avoid unnecessary publicity.

Jack had won the boy's gratitude by this simple ruse, and he had also won a place in the dog's affections.

But it was not to talk about the dog, though he followed closely at his heels, that Blantyre went across the landing to Jack's

rooms the next morning as soon as he was up.

‘Oh, Gray,’ he said, coming in after chapel with his fresh, honest face all aglow, ‘how awfully good of you ! You saved me being sent down. I—I should have lost my scholarship.’ Something choked in the boy’s throat, and he passed the sleeve of his gown across his eyes. ‘It was the most generous thing I ever heard. I don’t believe that the old spirit of chivalry is dead’—he was only a boy, and his head was full of romance—‘I shall never believe it is dead after last night. As for Brackenbury, such beastly mean——’

‘Hush !’ said Jack imperatively, and he put his hand over the boy’s lips. ‘Let him alone. That is between him and me. Let this be a warning to you, Blantyre’—and he laid his hand kindly on the boy’s shoulder—‘never risk your scholarship for any such

fool's folly again. The game isn't worth the candle. Stick to your work, and come out in the First Class. Don't disappoint the hopes of your friends, and—and break your mother's heart, and wreck your life, for the sake of a few fellows who will lead you on to—to ruin—and will not reach out a finger to save you.'

There were tears, honest tears, in Jack's blue eyes as he turned away, and the young scholar wrung his hand and left the room without a word.

He could not trust himself to speak. After he had gone Jack rummaged among the papers in his untidy drawers and found a slip of paper that his father had sent him in his first term.

It was in the Rector's big sprawly writing, and it was written in bad ink and had gone yellow with lying by. It used to be stuck up above the little shaving-glass in Jack's

narrow college bedroom during his freshman's year ; but it had long been hidden away in a drawer beneath a pile of bills.

The sight of the familiar writing brought back to him the happy, innocent days of that first term. What high hopes he had then ! What possibilities there were in that bright future !

It was all over now, he told himself. He had fallen out of the race. It might help the other fellow who had all his terms before him.

He took it over after breakfast, but the scholar was not in his rooms. He had gone to a lecture. Jack stuck it up behind a photograph of the boy's mother on his mantel-piece and left it there.

Blantyre saw it when he came in, and read it with a grave face :

‘ If thou do ill the joy fades, not the pain ;
If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.’

He didn't put it over the shaving-glass in

that narrow inner room—he had no need for a shaving-glass at present—but he stuck it up over the mantelpiece, where he found it—maybe it is there now.

Molly came in to see Jack later in the day. She, too, had heard of his escapade of the previous night. It is astonishing how quickly some things circulate—not generally nice things.

She did not come alone, which Jack resented—if he were to be bullied, he preferred to be bullied in private; she brought Dorothy Piggott with her.

‘Well,’ said Molly, in her sharp, ringing tones, and she could make them very disagreeable, ‘you’ve been getting into trouble again, Jack? Keith tells me that you were very nearly sent down.’

‘Keith had better mind his own business,’ said Jack surlily, pretending to be occupied with his books.

‘It is his business,’ said Molly, giving herself airs. ‘I told him to look after you. If you are lost to all shame, Jack, for yourself, you should think of your family. You should remember us.’

‘Us?’ Jack repeated sullenly; ‘I don’t see what you’ve got to do with it. It’s my business, not yours, nor that confounded prig’s, the Junior Dean’s. Did he send you here to bully me?’

He looked over to Miss Piggott as he spoke, with wrath in his eyes. He didn’t the least object to a row royal with Molly—in fact, he rather liked it; but he did object to spectators who would carry the miserable story back to Newnham.

He need not have troubled himself; Dorothy Piggott hadn’t heard a word that had passed. She was standing at the window looking out into the quad. She was looking towards a particular staircase, towards a

particular window, rather high up, and her eyes were dull no longer : they were shining and full of dreams.

There were gardeners at work in the quad, and the turf was being relaid, and all the signs of last night's disgraceful proceedings had been cleared away. There was not the shell of an irreverent squib or an abandoned cracker to be seen in the whole quadrangle.

'It is my business, Jack—and Adela's—but perhaps you have not heard. I'm sure she would not like it to come to Dr. Boulton's ears.'

'Hang Dr. Boulton !'

'Jack !' Molly's voice quite trembled at the profanity. 'But, of course, you haven't heard. I thought everybody knew.'

'I have heard that Adela is going to make a fool of herself, and marry a man old enough to be her father—her grandfather, I should say—if that is what you mean.'

‘ Oh, Jack, it is a splendid match ! Never mind about his age ; Adela will be Mistress of St. Margaret’s ! She will be a donness. She will live in the Lodge. She will sit on quite a regal throne under the organ-loft in chapel. She will sweep through the court as if it all belonged to her. She will entertain the Bishops, and the Judges, and the Royalties. She will rule over quite a little kingdom in her own right. She will be the first woman in Cambridge !’

Molly looked as if she would very much like to change places with her fortunate sister. Her eyes were hard and bright, and she was thinking with a little spasm of—well, impatience, that Adela would not have to pinch and contrive to furnish the drawing-room and the basement of St. Margaret’s Lodge with a poor little hundred pounds.

‘ I am very sorry for Adela,’ said Jack bluntly. ‘ I hoped she would do better. I

thought she was going to marry little Froissart.'

'Little Froissart ! Why, he's only a curate !'

'I would rather have had him in the family than—than Boulton,' said Jack with a sigh. 'He would have helped me out of this mess,' he added mentally ; 'while that old beggar——'

He didn't finish the sentence ; the door opened, and Mr. Brackenbury came in.

If Jack had looked at Dorothy Piggott's face he would have read his coming there before he was half-way across the quad. It had flushed gradually from pink to rosy red, and her eyes had softened.

Molly didn't notice that Jack received him stiffly ; but, indeed, he didn't take any notice of Jack. The two girls in the window were much better worth talking to than that surly old Jack, who had got the blues.

‘Why did you let Jack do such foolish things, Mr. Brackenbury?’ said Molly reproachfully — ‘letting off fireworks and making bonfires, like a schoolboy! and getting into trouble. Oh, why did you let him do it?’

Molly really was angry, and she beat her foot—it was a very pretty foot, and she wore nice shoes—impatiently upon the floor. She was thinking of Dr. Boulton, and what an undesirable brother-in-law Jack would be if he got into such foolish scrapes.

‘I am not exactly Jack’s keeper,’ said Mr. Brackenbury pensively. ‘He is so impetuous; he does not know when to hold his tongue.’

‘No,’ said Jack dryly; ‘you must give me a lesson.’

Then Mr. Brackenbury began to tell Dorothy Piggott about the Greek play. He was to take part in it. He was to sing, and recite no end of Greek; and he was to wear a

lovely Greek dress ; but he would not satisfy her curiosity as to the part he was to take in it.

‘ You are to be one of the maidens, I know,’ said Dorothy eagerly ; ‘ you would make a lovely maiden ;’ and then she blushed like a poppy.

‘ Yes,’ said Mr. Brackenbury ; ‘ I think a female character would suit me ; but I am not sure about the dress—I should require practice.’

He laughed a little low laugh ; he was thinking of a time—a hiatus in his chequered University career—when he had performed with a travelling dramatic company, and—and he had worn one of Rosey’s dresses.

‘ You will come and see me, Miss Piggott—Dorothy,’ he said softly ; ‘ I won’t learn another line if you don’t promise to come.’

‘ Of course I will come,’ said Dorothy ; ‘ but, oh ! I do hope you will know your

part—you will not break down. I couldn't bear it if you were to break down !'

She could have bitten her tongue out after she had said it—it would have been a painful operation, and she thought better of it—she remembered that he generally did break down at least, he always failed.

Mr. Brackenbury did not resent the imputation. He rather took it as a compliment.

'I shall be sure to forget half of it if you don't help me. If I could say it over to you sometimes, I should remember it. It's horribly dry learning it out of a book; I never remember things out of a book.'

How it came about Dorothy Piggott never knew, but she found herself committed to read Mr. Brackenbury's part of the Greek play with him until he knew it by heart.

The first reading came off the very next day, and the scene of it was the Backs.

The Backs in summer are delightful, and

they are generally frequented by lovers. The leafy shade of the tall trees, the perpetual cooing of the wood-pigeons in the branches overhead, the winding river, the picturesque bridges, the stately avenues, the view of the old colleges, and above all the sweet seclusion, recommend them to lovers.

But in November, when the trees are bare, and there is a nasty wet mist over everything, blotting out the colleges and the bridges, and even the branches overhead, the case is altered. Nevertheless, Dorothy Piggott and Mr. Brackenbury walked here day after day, though the mist was so thick that you could cut it with a knife and bring away a slice of it. You generally brought away quite as much as you needed, in the shape of soaked and soddened garments, without that operation.

There was one advantage in the mist : they did not meet any lovers. The readings were uninterrupted.

But they did not always read Greek in these gray misty November days when they walked in the leafless Backs.

There was no one to overhear them, whatever they read or talked—no doubt they talked the greatest nonsense imaginable. No one would have believed that a student in a woman's college—much less a Second Wrangler—could have talked such nonsense.

They lingered beneath the dripping branches, in the nasty aguish mist, until the short November days closed in, and then Dorothy Piggott would scurry back to Newnham. She didn't mind the fogs a bit; in fact, she rather liked them. No one would be idiotic enough to risk diphtheria, rheumatism, and ague by walking in the Backs at such a time, so that they ran no risk of detection.

On the last day of these Greek exercises Dorothy lingered with her lover later than

usual, and he walked back with her to Newnham. He did not walk the way that Miss Godolphin and the Newnham students walked when they came into Cambridge. He chose a more retired route, that led behind some college buildings and among some unused tennis-courts, where they would not be likely to meet anyone.

Anything damper or more forlorn-looking than this retired way it is impossible to imagine. Not only did a gray fog hang over everything, but all around was wet and gray.

The trees were shivering overhead, the fields were soddened, the hedges dripping, and just visible in some gaps in the hedge, where gardens and summer-houses once stood, were some miserable débris of what had once been a temple with statues, and garlands, and altars. They were all wrecked and overturned now: the statues were shattered, and the altars

broken, and the gray funereal mist was dripping from them all.

Dorothy shivered involuntarily, and gathered her skirts around her. They were limp and draggled, and clung about her heels; but her heart was so hot within her that she had forgotten that she was wet and cold.

‘Do you think you are quite perfect, Neil?’ she asked her lover. ‘Do you think you will remember?’

‘If I forget I shall look up at you; you must sit in the front of the balcony where I can see you, and the sight of you will be inspiration.’

Dorothy Piggott sighed.

She had never inspired a man before, though she made a great many men angry and ashamed.

‘If I could only help you, Neil, in—in other things?’ she said timidly. She was

thinking of those examinations in which he had failed.

‘If you could only get me through my “General,” Dolly!’ he said airily. ‘By Jove, I think I should get through with you for a coach!’

‘Oh, Neil, you—you forget I’m only a woman, and I have done so little Greek; but I will read it up. I will help you, Neil, if you will let me.’

She spoke so humbly, as if asking a favour at her lover’s hands.

Mr. Brackenbury laughed.

‘By Jove!’ he said, ‘you ought to have been the man, Dolly. Pity we can’t change!’

‘No, no,’ she said eagerly, ‘I would rather have it as it is; I like to lean on you, Neil; I like to feel that you have chosen me above all other women in the world. My brave, strong, manly Neil!’

Her face was soft and beautiful — quite

beautiful ; for a moment she had forgotten all the mathematics that she had ever learnt : she only remembered her lover. Her head was swimming, her heart was beating, and his arm was about her.

‘The obligation is mine,’ he said softly. ‘Why, Dolly, you might have married the Vice-Chancellor!’

She laughed a little low laugh — no one in Newnham knew that Dorothy Piggott had such a dear little laugh—and she laid her head upon his shoulder.

‘Oh, Neil!’ she whispered shyly, ‘I would not give you up for—for the Chancellor himself!’ And then she hid her blushing face on the shoulder of the good-for-nothing undergraduate who had been twice plucked in his ‘General.’

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GREEK PLAY.

‘All the arts that now we practise in a desultory way
Shall be taught us to perfection when we own the ladies’
sway.’

THE little Cambridge theatre—which is after all, only a music-hall with a balcony—was never crowded with such a critical, appreciative audience as on the first night of the Greek play. Every seat had been secured at least a week before the day, and the quiet, orderly crowd poured in leisurely, assured that there would be no disappointment and no crush.

The Newnham girls came in a body, and

took up all the best seats in the balcony. There was a thin line of men here and there between the rows of girls, but they only occurred accidentally : the Newnhamites and the Girtonites had seized upon the most favourable position in the house, and maintained it.

The undergraduates mustered in great force behind, and enjoyed a distracting view of fair young backs, relieved occasionally by more distracting profiles.

There had been great searchings of heart at Newnham for some weeks before the Greek play, and the Cambridge dressmakers had had a bad time of it. With one consent the toilettes had been copied from classic models, and the arrangement of the soft, clinging draperies must have driven the local artistes to the verge of suicide.

Dorothy Piggott wore a soft white silk frock that fell in lovely folds over her plump

girlish figure. No one had ever dreamed that she had such lovely shoulders and such round white arms, and that her eyes could ever be so bright. A great transformation had suddenly taken place, and Dorothy Piggott was a new creature.

Molly was, of course, in pink. She always wore pink, because it became her as nothing else did. She was a rose of the rosebud garden of girls, and she would have looked dreadful in blue. She had a gold fillet in her hair like Dorothy Piggott's, and she wore it like all the other girls, in the most approved Greek style.

Everybody was armed with a copy of the play in the original Greek, and they followed the actors throughout with an entirely learned and critical air that was quite delightful to behold. The old college dons, who mustered in the stalls beneath, were not half so critical as the sweet girl-graduates in the balcony.

The Princess Ida—I beg her pardon, Miss Godolphin—sat like a goddess among her attendant nymphs. At any fine passage, and whenever the Chorus swelled out into a noble *Io Pæan*, the girls looked round and nodded to her, and she nodded vigorously back; and the large mobile mouth, cut with such absolute decision, would break into a smile with a sudden flash of white teeth.

One understood the enthusiasm of the girls when they looked on the noble face of this woman who ruled them. She raised an ideal among them in which there was nothing base or frivolous or ignoble. She lifted up their hearts and their minds, and kept them at that high level.

Never was there a performance so absorbing: it is not too much to say that not a single word of the play was lost. Sometimes to have heard a pin drop would not have adequately conveyed the situation. To have

heard the echo of the dropped pin go travelling round the house would have been nearer the truth.

Perhaps this breathless attention was not wholly due to the charm of the Greek play itself, the ability of the actors, the delightful costumes, the artistic beauty of the scenery, or even the well-trained voices of the Chorus.

Everybody in the front was interested in somebody on the stage. There were plenty of people to be interested in.

There were men of Trinity, John's, King's, Pembroke, and nearly every other college in the 'Varsity. There were citizens and attendants without number in the play, beside the Chorus. Everybody that could be got on to the limited stage was lugged in by the heels — at least, he was beautifully dressed, and armed with a crook or some ridiculous weapon, and desired to stand at ease and look pretty.

The men performed this part of the programme perfectly. They stood very much at ease, and they looked lovely! And, oh, the way the Greek came out! There never was such a public exhibition of manly limbs as the scanty Greek draperies revealed. Such legs! such arms! such chests!

Oh, it was splendid!

It brought the tears into the girls' eyes—at least, into the eyes of girls of the higher culture.

It was like going back to the old days; it was like living the old life over again. The old, old ideas: eternal youth—love—beauty. They were all here; and in their midst an altar for their worship.

No wonder the girls' eyes moistened, and the echo of that dropped pin went travelling round the house.

They made woman into a goddess in those days, and they worshipped her.

They worshipped Love, too, and Youth. Perhaps they are worshipped still? Nobody thought of the extravagant words—they had greater natures in those old days, and thought extravagantly; they exaggerated every joy; they raised nobler ideals.

It is only since our ideals have been low that we have been so precise about our words.

But it was not any ideal that Dorothy Piggott was worshipping, as she sat eager and breathless in the front row of the balcony, unless, indeed, it were the Ideal Man.

The Ideal Man wore a gracefully-falling garment of some soft white material, and his arms and neck were bare. Perhaps he had been chosen for the beauty of his shapely arms, and his white, full throat, and his pale, close-shaven face. He was the only maiden in the group that could bear the crucial test of white. There was a maiden in pea-green, and another in pink, tall and stately, with black,

hairy arms, and throat that no amount of powder could make fair.

Mr. Brackenbury looked the character to perfection. That pensive expression and the droop of his eyelids were the making of it. He didn't forget his part, and Dorothy Piggott thought she had never heard anything so clear and pure and sweet as Mr. Brackenbury's mouthing of the rhythmic Greek—sweet, so sweet, that it took her breath away and made her heart stand still.

But it didn't take his breath away.

'You didn't throw tears enough into your voice,' said the manager reproachfully, when Mr. Brackenbury came off after the first act.

'Not tears enough? I chucked a whole bucketful into it!'

He had 'chucked' so much liquid into it that he had to resort to a fountain that bubbled

near to get a fresh supply before he went on in the second part.

The attention of the audience—at least, of that part of the audience that consisted of the students of the women's colleges—was so strained that it was quite a relief when the curtain fell on the first part.

And then arose a pretty babel in the balcony, the girls all beginning to talk at once. Oh, such learned talk! There was quite a delightful flutter and rustle—not of fans, but of the leaves of the Greek author—and the girls began to compare notes and to criticise.

They looked so entirely learned and superior, with their delightful profiles and provoking pince-nez—that prevented men seeing how bright their eyes were—and Greek filleted hair, and gleaming shoulders, that the meek undergraduates who had got in among them sat awestricken and silent.

Dorothy Piggott had no notes to compare, and she didn't criticise. She hadn't paid much attention to the play. She hadn't heard a word that had been sung or said, except the plaintive tones of a pensive maiden. She had no eyes or ears for anyone but Mr. Brackenbury.

Perhaps it was not a solitary case. Mr. Brackenbury remembered his part perfectly. There was only one hitch: no, not exactly a hitch—a pause rather.

It was when he came on in the second part (after that copious libation to recruit the fountain of his tears), when he paused in the middle of a sentence and looked up with a smile—which had no business there—on his lip, and a demure twinkle in his pensive eyes, to the balcony where Dorothy was sitting.

Did he do it to frighten her?

It gave him the opportunity of making a very pretty speech when he saw her in the

vestibule after the play, and of assuring her that she was the inspiring genius who had brought the words back to his mind.

A very strange thing happened after the Greek play, when the girls got back to Newnham.

Dorothy Piggott saw a ghost!

She had not spoken a word during the drive home. She had leaned back in the carriage with her wraps around her, and had buried her face in the scarf that was twisted round her head. There was a strange look of exaltation, the girls remarked, on her face as she went up the stairs. All of them were talking eagerly about the play, and they didn't take much notice of Dorothy Piggott, but they saw this strange light on her face.

They went upstairs to their rooms and threw off their wraps, and came down to supper. But Dorothy Piggott threw off her gown. It was such a pretty gown!

She had designed it herself from an old model, and the soft rich material hung in classic folds. She had never looked so well in her life : her dark hair with its golden fillet ; the soft clinging dress ; the golden armlets ; and the dainty chain of gold with its Greek pendant rising and falling on her bosom.

She stood before her glass a minute, and looked at the unusual image presented there with a mute wonder in her eyes.

How pretty her arms were ! how Greek and graceful her round girlish figure ! and there were no mathematics in her eyes.

She stood for a moment before the glass, then took off the trinkets one by one, and last of all she took off the pretty gown and laid it on a chair.

She laid it aside with something like a sigh. There was nothing to sigh for ; she could put it on again at any time.

It had been a quite perfect evening. It had been an evening of unalloyed bliss—her cup had been full; and it seemed to her that, in laying aside the Greek gown, she had somehow laid aside the crowning happiness of her life.

She put on a dowdy everyday frock, and she went downstairs—at least, she went out into the corridor, closing the door behind her. All the other girls had gone down some time ago. None of the others had taken off their dresses. It was a long corridor, with the doors of the girls' rooms on either side, and the stairs at the end of it.

As she closed the door and stepped out into the lighted corridor she saw someone coming up the staircase and rapidly approaching her. It was a familiar figure.

It was strangely familiar, and the sight of it made her heart stand still.

It was a girl in a white dress, with a gold

fillet in her hair, and a necklet with a Greek pendant on her bosom. The girl raised her head as she passed her, and their eyes met—*it was herself!*

Dorothy Piggott went straight back to her room, where she had left her dress, and turned her lamp up. The white dress was still on the chair and the ornaments on the table. Everything was as she left it.

Clearly it must be an illusion.

She turned down the lamp, giving a last look at the white soft frock on the chair, and, smiling at her fears, went rapidly down the corridor.

As she reached the head of the stairs, the same figure came slowly up, with drooping head, and the Greek golden ornament on the bosom rising and falling.

Dorothy Piggott stood quite still, and let the figure pass. It did not raise its head; but she heard distinctly the soft rustle of the

silken drapery, and she watched it, with a strange fascination in the sight, walk slowly down the whole length of the gallery and pause at her door.

Then, with a dull heavy thud, she fell to the ground.

Some girls in the hall below heard the thud, and went up the stairs, to see what was the matter.

Dorothy Piggott had fainted.

CHAPTER XXV.

JACK BREAKS HIS GATE.

THE Greek play was a great success.

The little Cambridge theatre was crowded every night.

There were five representations of it, including an afternoon performance, so that everybody had a chance of seeing it. Some men went every night. The Newnham girls would have gone every night, too, but for that little incident of Dorothy Piggott.

She was picked up insensible, and carried to her room. When she regained consciousness, and saw where she was, and that dreadful gown lying on the chair, she remembered the

figure that she had met in the corridor, and she clung to Miss Godolphin, and implored her to take her away; to let her go anywhere—anywhere out of sight of that hateful gown.

She wept and prayed hysterically to be taken away; and she would not be pacified until they had removed her to another room. She could not bear the sight of the corridor or the staircase; and she covered her face over, and trembled in every limb as they bore her down the stairs into a room beneath.

It was clearly a *crise de nerfs*.

She couldn't offer any explanation. She could only weep and tremble, and implore them to keep all the hateful finery she had worn that night out of her sight.

A doctor was called in the next morning, and he found her in a state of high fever. Pulse and temperature had gone up during the night, and her head was bewildered. Her brain had been overtaxed; she had been

working too hard all through the term, and she had broken down. The excitement of the previous night had been the last straw. At least this was what the doctor said.

There were other symptoms that complicated the case. He knew nothing of those damp walks in the Backs, and the wet, soddened condition of Dorothy Piggott's skirts when she returned to Newnham after that last Greek reading with Mr. Brackenbury.

He prescribed perfect quiet and rest ; and warned Miss Godolphin of the consequences of undue excitement to such highly-strung natures as the students of Newnham.

A fiat went forth that only one, or in some cases two, visits more could be made to the Greek play.

It was too exciting.

Molly did not even take advantage of this permission. She did not want to go again. She couldn't understand a word. The effect

of her pretty new Greek dress had been quite thrown away—and she had spent all her term's allowance upon it.

Nobody had looked at her. Everybody had been much too busy looking at the actors on the stage. She might just as well have gone in a dowdy frock and saved the money.

She threw it aside, in her untidy way, on the top of her dress-basket, vowing she would never wear the thing again. But she changed her mind within a week.

Mrs. Gray had taken tickets for a concert at the Guildhall, and she invited her nieces to accompany her.

So Molly took out the despised frock, shook out the creases, stuck some bows about it to make it look less Greek, and pinned a big trail of flowers across the front.

It suited her down to the ground; and when she surveyed herself in the glass, on the

night of the concert, the friendly mirror gave back a most consoling reflection.

She shook out her skirts, and hummed her favourite tune as she went down the stairs :

‘I love the merry, merry sunshine, it makes my
heart so glad.’

No girl’s heart could be gladder than Molly’s, as she stood dressed for the concert in Mrs. Gray’s drawing-room. There was a mirror near, so that she could get furtive views of a lovely vision in pink, which added to her satisfaction. Her lover was one of the party. The tutor of Clare had failed at the last moment, and the Junior Dean had been persuaded to take his place.

Clerical attire is never too cheerful when worn as evening-dress ; and Molly’s lover, when he followed meekly in her wake into the big, brilliantly lighted concert-room, looked very much as if he were going to a funeral. He was more absent and preoccupied than

ever; and there was a troubled look upon his face which did not become a bridegroom-elect.

That dreadful house was upon his mind. It hung like a chain upon his neck—it lay like a load upon his heart. It was a nightmare that disturbed his sleep and haunted all his waking hours: he was pursued with visions of kitchen utensils—they usually took the form of frying-pans—and he was harassed every day with the fear that Mrs. Gray would ask him for that cheque.

In this frame of mind he did not pay much attention to the concert. Mrs. Gray had selected seats very near the front, in the middle row, so that he could see and hear well enough if he had chosen to.

Molly sat next to her lover; and being in a good temper with herself, she was in a good temper with him. She talked to him behind her fan through all the first part. It was

not at all a tender conversation. It was only about the kitchen things.

She was saying nothing that everyone in the room might not have heard ; but she had such a way with her of saying commonplace things that they might be fraught with the deepest meaning.

Her eyes were so bright, and her face was eager and smiling, and she was murmuring in a delightful low voice, with a ripple of laughter in it—it was about the new kitchen range—and people sitting near looked over to where they sat and smiled or frowned, according to whether or not they were interested in the overture.

Molly hadn't the least interest in the music, nor, indeed, had the Junior Dean. He was quite satisfied to sit whispering to Molly behind her fan ; to admire her delightful profile ; to meet the merry glance of her bright eyes, and to murmur back senseless

rejoinders about that wretched house. Other people remarked the whispering and the murmuring they kept up behind that pink fan all through the first part of the programme. A woman seated on the platform among the singers never took her eyes off them all the time.

Her colour came and went while she watched them—that is, as much of it as was not stationary—and her bosom heaved, and her fingers twitched nervously over the bouquet she had in her lap.

It was a big bouquet, and she had brought it in proudly, and sniffed it tenderly during the opening of the overture, until Mrs. Gray's party had come in—then she sniffed it no more.

Some impressionable undergraduate had no doubt sent it to her before the concert, and she had sniffed it tenderly for the sake of the unknown giver.

Now, watching those two foolish lovers whispering behind the fan, she picked it deliberately to pieces.

When her turn to sing came, quite a shower of fragrant petals fell from her lap to the floor. She came forward with a *frou-frou* rustle of her trailing skirts, and took her place in the front of the platform—a fair woman with a waxen complexion and a creamy apricot gown. It was hard to say where the gown left off and the waxen shoulders began.

It didn't leave off a bit too soon. A red spot was burning on the woman's cheeks, and her eyes were flashing as she stood with the music in her hand, looking down at the audience beneath.

Then her voice rang out.

At the first note—it wasn't low and sweet as it should have been, but clear and piercing, like the cry of some wounded soul—the Junior Dean looked up.

The murmured whisper died on his lips, and all the colour died suddenly out of his face.

The smile was still there—the tender, happy smile with which he was regarding the woman he loved—but it was frozen on his lips.

He listened to the song like one in a dream, and when it was over he got up and left the hall.

Nobody noticed the effect the voice of the beautiful singer had upon him but Adela. She had nothing else to do but to watch people. She didn't care for music, but she liked a crush ; and she amused herself with watching Molly and her lover.

She not only watched the Junior Dean, but she watched through her beautiful little opera-glass — a gift of the Master of St. Margaret's—the singer on the platform. Her glass showed her that the woman was agitated—was deeply moved, indeed—and that

when Molly's lover rose from his seat and went down through the long room, her eyes followed him all the way.

When he had gone the woman kept her eyes riveted on Molly. She never took them off her till the concert was over ; and even then she stepped back as she was leaving the platform to take a last look at her.

Molly sat all unconscious of the interest this singing woman took in her. She didn't even listen to her song. She had no reverence for art, and she didn't admire painted women. When her lover was gone she talked to a man behind her till the end of the concert.

In the vestibule outside the Junior Dean was waiting when she came out. The heat of the room, he explained, was too much for him, and he had gone outside for a breath of air.

Nobody but Adela made the slightest refer-

ence during the drive home to the woman who sang.

‘Have you ever heard Mdlle. Rose De l’Orme before, Keith?’ she asked, with her usual directness.

‘Ye-e-e-s,’ said the Junior Dean, ‘I have heard her before.’

‘In Cambridge?’

‘No. I have never heard her in Cambridge.’

The carriage stopped at Mrs. Gray’s door as they were speaking, and Molly remarked that her lover’s arm trembled as he helped her to alight.

He wouldn’t go in to supper, and he didn’t offer to drive back to Newnham with his *fiancée* and her sister. He went straight back to his rooms, and dreamed all night of Rosey and her apricot gown.

There was a little supper at the shady house in the Newmarket Road after the concert.

Mr. Brackenbury was there, and Jack was there, too.

He had broken his gate.

He ought to have known better. He ought to have stayed within his college walls and eaten his bread of humiliation. The Greek play hadn't tempted him to break his gate—he had borne this great deprivation with fortitude; but he had broken his gate to hear Rosey sing.

He had crept up into the gallery at the back of the crowd, and had not missed a note of her delightful voice; and now he had come boldly up to the Newmarket Road to supper.

Rosey had changed since the old days—it seemed like old days to Jack, looking back, so much had happened since. Her eyes were not so soft and dreamy as Jack remembered them; there was a hard glitter in them now, and on her lovely face, beneath the softness and the bloom—it had still the bloom and

softness of a ripe peach—there was an expression of anxiety and eagerness.

She had not forgotten Jack ; but she did not smile up into Mr. Brackenbury's face as she smiled up in the old days. There was a scornful impatience in her manner, not only of Mr. Brackenbury's attentions, but of all Mrs. De l'Orme's guests. All her pretty caressing ways were gone.

'You were very cruel to my flowers, Rosey,' said Mr. Brackenbury, who had managed to get the seat by her side at supper.

'Oh, you sent them?' she said in a tone of surprise.

'Yes, who else should ?'

'I don't know. I thought——'

'Who did you think ?'

'Anybody—everybody—but you,' and she tapped her foot impatiently on the floor. 'It didn't matter who sent them. I left them

behind me on the platform ; they made me feel sick.'

Mr. Brackenbury laughed — he wasn't the least hurt. Rosey's petulant moods were not new to him. Most men who had paid a guinea for a bouquet of hothouse flowers would have been hurt ; but Mr. Brackenbury had not yet paid the guinea for it.

'Who was that man who went out while I was singing?' she asked.

'He didn't go out while you were singing, my dear ; no man in his senses *could* go out while *you* were singing. He went out when the song was finished. Perhaps you made him feel bad. The man who went out was our Junior Dean.'

'And the woman beside him—the woman with a pink fan?'

Rosey's eyes were bright and eager ; there was no softness in them now, and her voice was not at all caressing.

‘The lovely girl beside him,’ said Mr. Brackenbury slowly, watching every change in his companion’s face, ‘is the relative of one of our respected dons. She is the acknowledged belle of Cambridge; she is a student at one of the colleges for women; she is as learned as she is beautiful.’

He enumerated all these details slowly and with a kind of enjoyment, watching Rosey’s face flush and wince as she listened eagerly to his words.

‘I don’t want to know all that,’ said Rosey impatiently. ‘What is she to — to your Junior Dean?’

Mr. Brackenbury laughed a little silent laugh, and a twinkle of amusement came into his pensive eyes.

‘She is what you are to me, Rosey—she is the apple of his eye. She is what Eve, the frail and the beguiling, was to our first parent. She is a witch who has lured him away from

the monastic life, from ascetic bachelor ways ; the Circe that has caught him in her toils ; the Delilah that has shorn him of his strength. She is all of these to our Junior Dean.'

He had a cruel enjoyment in mystifying Rosey with this ironical jargon. He derived the greatest pleasure in seeing her face flush and grow pale beneath the rouge as he proceeded.

Rosey drew a deep breath.

'She may be all this to him, and to other men, but is she anything more to him?'

Her lips were so dry that she had to moisten them before she could speak, and her voice was low with concentrated passion.

'Yes, she is a great deal more to him than --than to other men,' he said with the mockery of a sigh, and prolonging the woman's suspense. 'She is more to him, alas! than she is to me. She is going to——' a gleam came suddenly into Rosey's eyes, and all

the colour forsook her face. She was so white that he thought she was going to faint, and he paused in the middle of his mocking speech.

‘Go on,’ she said hoarsely ; ‘she is going to——’

‘I was merely about to remark that our Junior Dean will shortly marry the lovely girl you are so interested in. Her brother is sitting opposite to you, and he will tell you all about her.’

Rosey didn’t faint ; she only cowered under his words as if she had received a blow.

‘May I give you some wine ?’ he asked her, with a mockery in his politeness that would have jarred on any other woman.

Rosey did not answer him, but she took the glass of champagne that he poured out, with the delightful little beads bubbling on the surface, and raised it to her lips.

Her teeth struck against the glass as she

raised it with a shaking hand to her lips ; but there were no bubbles sparkling up to the light when she set it down again on the table—for the glass was empty.

It brought back the colour to her cheeks, and the light to her eyes. Not the old light—a lurid light that changed the colour of everything she saw ; a hot, fierce flame that crimsoned all the faces in the room. She shuddered and looked down at the white cloth that had suddenly become scarlet, and at her white hand that still held the glass.

White ?

What was that upon it—that dark spot ?

Oh, God ! it was blood !

Her head was swimming, and there was a singing in her ears ; but Rosey did not faint.

She had not drunk any champagne for, oh, so long—she used to wear a bit of blue ribbon in the Sunday-school at Llanberys—

and the unaccustomed bubbles of that strange vintage in her brain had caused the *ocular spectrum* that disturbed her nerves.

She was better again in a moment, and smiling, but not on Mr. Brackenbury. She didn't smile on him during the remainder of the evening, and he betook himself upstairs where a green table was spread that offered him an unfailing welcome.

Jack remained downstairs, and Rosey smiled on him. She smiled on him until she had gleaned from him all the information she desired.

She learnt all that he could tell her about Molly and her lover. She knew the exact date of the wedding ; the situation of the little house; and how long the engagement had existed.

She heard it all with the warm red light of that champagne-cup in her eyes and a smile upon her lips.

When Mr. Brackenbury bent over her hand with mocking courtesy to say good-night, he whispered gaily :

‘ You will send her a wedding present, Rosey ? ’

She looked up with that red light in her eyes, and her lips drawn and tight.

‘ Yes,’ she said slowly, ‘ I will certainly send her a wedding present.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

A RAW December morning was looking in like a pale ghost to the small, narrow, deeply-mullioned windows of St. Stephen's.

There were lights burning in most of the windows where men were working, for it was too dark to read without them. A nasty wet fog was coming down, or rising up, and the vapour that filled the courts had a strong taste of soot in it, combined with an unctuous flavour of the college kitchen.

It was not a day that anyone would have chosen to be out in. The porter at St. Stephen's thought it so unlikely that any-

one would be out, that he had left the lodge and gone over to the college buttery to have a glass of the home-brewed college ale. When he came back, wiping his lips on the threshold, he saw someone waiting for him in the lodge.

The fog was so thick that he couldn't see very well, but he saw by the dress it was a lady. She wore a thick veil, and she spoke hurriedly; he thought she was agitated, as her voice trembled as she spoke. She asked him to show her Mr. Fellowes' rooms.

He pointed out the staircase to her, and she went quickly through the quad. She returned presently and told him that she couldn't find it, and he went across the court with her.

He went by her wish up the stairs before her and showed her the door of the Junior Dean's rooms, with his name in white letters above it, 'MR. FELLOWES.'

She knocked at the door timidly, so timidly that no one within could have heard the knock. The porter, who was going down the stairs, turned back and rapped loudly at the door.

‘It’s no use to knock like that, mum ; gentlemen never hears unless you knock hard ;’ and he rapped again with such effect that the echo went travelling up the dark staircase, and round the misty court in quite a ghostly fashion.

‘I don’t think he’s at home, mum,’ said the porter, putting his head into the door ; ‘perhaps you’d leave your name and call again ? He will be in to his lunch at one o’clock. He’s not likely to go out such a day as this ; would you call again ?’

‘I would rather wait for him, if I may ?’ said the lady timidly.

She had a soft, persuasive voice, and she looked like a lady—and she slipped half a crown into the man’s hand.

‘Certainly, mum, if you don’t mind waiting,’ he said, touching his cap. ‘Mr. Fellowes is uncertain in the mornings ; but he’s sure to be in at lunch.’

The lady took a seat, and the porter closed the door and went down the stairs. She sat still until she heard him reach the bottom, and his footsteps echo on the pavement beneath, and then she rose up and looked curiously round the Junior Dean’s room.

There was not much to see in that bare college room. There were no luxurious couches or chairs, or tables with dainty knick-nacks. There were no photographs of college clubs on the walls ; no actresses—there was a Bishop or two, and a name above the mantelpiece in Hebrew.

It was the name of the Junior Dean’s Master, but it was strange to Rosey.

But she did not look for this ; she was looking for a photograph of a woman’s face. She

had sent him her own once, but it was not there. There were no photographs on the mantelpiece ; there were none on the shelves ; there were none on his writing-table.

There were papers and letters just received lying open on the Junior Dean's writing-table ; and there was a tempting array of drawers above.

The woman went over to the table and pulled out the drawers hurriedly, tossing the contents over. She had not far to look. On the top of the lower drawer, close to the hand of anyone who sat writing at the table, was a morocco case. It opened with a spring, and within was a likeness of Molly Gray.

It was a delightful likeness !

It had caught her happiest expression. She wore a very becoming gown, and a very becoming hat, and her best smile.

It was an airy, fairy vision of girlish beauty. It was a thing for a man to rave about.

Molly wasn't half so lovely as the photographer's art had made her, though the picture was like her.

The woman drew her breath hard, and a gleam came into her eyes, and the room swam before her—a red, red room.

She closed the red morocco case sharply, and replaced the photograph in the drawer. And then she began to look among the letters on the Junior Dean's table. She had not the slightest hesitation in opening them ; but they were not worth reading.

There were no dainty little pink notes that smelt nice, and were written in an angular hand, on the Junior Dean's table. There was a square letter, with a blurred and blotted address, written in a big sprawling hand like a schoolboy's. This the woman turned over, and then, with her eager, inquisitive fingers, took the letter out from the envelope and read it.

The letter was from Molly. It was a hasty, incoherent letter, full of little details about the house, and making an appointment with her lover to go over it that afternoon. 'I will call for you at three,' the letter went on to say ; 'and Adela and Aunt Gray will meet us there. I want you, *darling*, to look in somewhere on the way and see some chairs.'

Darling !

The woman crushed up the letter in her hand. She did not seek to put it back in the envelope ; and as she stood by the table, with a red spot burning on her cheeks, and Molly's letter in her hand, the Junior Dean came in.

He couldn't see her very well in that dim light, and with Molly's letter in his mind he thought for a moment it was Molly.

He went forward to meet her, with a tender smile of welcome on his lips, and his hands, I'm afraid his arms, outstretched ; and then, suddenly, he stopped short, and his hands

dropped down, and the light went out of his eyes.

‘You here!’ he said; but he didn’t say it at all warmly.

‘You thought it was her,’ Rosey said bitterly—she had seen the light go out of his face. ‘You did not expect me, Mr. Fellowes?’

‘No,’ said the Junior Dean, ‘I did not expect you. I—I did not think you would do me the honour to come to my rooms. I thought you would write—it is the usual course—if you wanted to communicate with me.’

She shrank back when he spoke to her in these cold, measured tones as if she had received a blow.

‘Oh, Mr. Fellowes!’ she said, and her self-control gave way, and she burst into a fit of weeping. ‘You are going to be married! I—I have come to hear it from your own lips. Is it true you are going to be married?’

‘It is perfectly true,’ said the Junior Dean stiffly ; ‘but I do not see that it concerns you. It is a—a private affair.’

‘Not concern me ! Oh, Mr. Fellowes, after all you have been to me ! After all you have done for me !’

Rosey was getting dramatic, and her voice rose with her emotion, and she was sobbing hysterically.

It was very embarrassing, for the men were going up and down the stairs outside, and they could not fail to hear the unusual sound of weeping in the Junior Dean’s room.

‘I have done no more for you, Rose’—he couldn’t say Mdlle. Rose De l’Orme; it was like mockery—‘than—than I should have done for any other—er—woman in distress.’

‘You have saved my life,’ sobbed Rosey. ‘You have done more for me than you have done for any other woman; and you have won my heart! What did you mean, Mr.

Fellowes, by all those visits, and the long walks we had together, and taking me away from my old life—making me give up my friends, my profession—by keeping me in idleness all these months, by the money you sent me less than a month ago? What did you mean by all these?’ she asked fiercely. There was a gleam in Rosey’s eyes that he had never seen there before; and there was a tone in her voice that meant mischief.

‘Whatever I have done,’ said the Junior Dean gravely, ‘God knows I have done it with the best intention. I have done no more for you than I would have done for any other—er—woman in distress.’

‘For any other woman?’ she repeated scornfully. ‘You must be a rich man, Mr. Fellowes!’—and she looked round the plain, bare room, where there were certainly no outward signs of wealth. ‘You must be a rich man to send every girl that applies to

you in distress the money you have sent me during the last few months. How many other actresses are you keeping, Mr. Fellowes, as you are so prodigal with your money, and I am only one of many?’

The Junior Dean winced as if her words had stung him, and his face flushed.

‘I—I did not expect this, Rose,’ he said very gravely, with a pain that he could not keep out of his voice—‘I did not expect misconstruction; not from you, at least.’

‘Misconstruction!’ she repeated scornfully; ‘what could you expect but misconstruction? You had no right to beguile me with your soft words and your presents. You had no right to take me out of my place—to fill my mind with ideas, with longings for—for a different life. You had no right to make me dissatisfied with my profession, to hate the life I had always led; you had no right to do this unless you meant to take me out of it;

unless—unless you intended me for better things.’

There was some show of reason in Rosey’s wild words, and the Junior Dean hung his head.

‘I am very sorry,’ he said humbly. ‘I—I am sincerely sorry if anything that I have done should—should have led you to suppose——’

It is very difficult to explain to a woman that you have really had no intentions. Women manage these things so much better than men.

‘Suppose?’ repeated Rosey, with a sudden passion in her eyes; ‘what else could I suppose after—after all you have done for me? What else could I suppose when you paid my debts, and took me away from my lodgings; and—and found other rooms for me, and took them in your own name, not mine, and kept me there for months? What else could I

suppose when you sent me money, week after week ; when you took my jewellery out of pawn, when you bought me new dresses that I might accept this engagement ? Why, the dress I wore last night, the dress I am wearing now, you paid for !’

The Junior Dean hung his head.

‘ I did it for the best,’ he said humbly.
‘ God knows I did it for the best !’

‘ Then, doubtless, you have told her—this girl you are going to marry—all about your presents to me. You have shown her your letters ; you have read her mine. She knows all about those long walks in the moonlight by the sea—about those rooms you took for me. Did you tell her that you had paid my debts, and had taken my things out of pawn ? Did you tell her that you had kept me for months ? Did you tell her that you had sent me a cheque for fifty pounds only a few weeks ago ?’

‘Why should I tell Miss Gray these things?’ said the Junior Dean, and a dusky red crept up under his skin, and his lip trembled; but his eyes were grave and steady.

‘If you have not told her, then I will!’ said Rosey. Her cheeks were burning, her eyes were flashing, and she stood trembling with rage and passion—a very fury. ‘She shall not marry you without knowing what you have done for me—for an actress you picked out of the gutter; she shall hear from my lips, if not from yours, that you have been sending me money up to the very eve of your marriage. She shall see your letters, I have them all with me—every one!’

‘Why should you do this?’ he said gravely, but his lip trembled. ‘Why should you do this wicked thing? Your affairs cannot possibly concern her.’

‘But they shall concern her!’

Rosey’s eyes were flashing, and a red

gleam came into them ; they were no longer soft and dreamy, and her voice was not at all caressing.

‘ There is but one alternative, Keith Fellowes : give up this girl and I will go away and trouble you no more. Attempt to go on with the marriage and I will show her your letters ; I will tell her all you have done for me—that the clothes on my back are paid for by you. I do not think it will be a pleasant story for her to hear !’

His face was very noble and grave, and there was a pained look on it that would have touched most women ; but it didn’t touch Rosey.

‘ I shall certainly go on with the marriage, and if Miss Gray hears the story of—of your ingratitude, she will hear it from my lips.’

‘ Oh yes, you will tell her what it suits you to tell her, and you will gloss it over in your own way !’

‘ I shall tell her the truth.’

‘ The truth ! That you have ruined my life, that——’

Rosey’s bitter words were cut short by a knock at the door, and a man came into the room.

It was the senior tutor.

‘ Oh, I beg your pardon, I didn’t know you were engaged; I’ll come in again.’ He was going away, but Rosey slipped by him into the passage outside.

‘ It doesn’t matter; I was just going,’ she said hurriedly, and she went quickly down the stairs.

The tutor held the door open for her to pass, and he looked after her as she went down the stairs.

‘ Where the deuce have I seen that woman?’ he asked himself.

But Rosey had no need to ask herself when she and Mr. Flynt had last met. The sight of

him had recalled the time when she used to go up and down his staircase carrying a covered basket. Mr. De l'Orme was a gyp then, and Rosey used to fetch away the spoil.

The senior tutor was puzzling himself to remember the woman's face, and he did not remark Keith Fellowes' agitation ; besides, the room was so dark he couldn't see clearly a couple of yards away.

'I came to speak to you, Fellowes, about Gray,' he said, plunging into the subject of his visit, and dismissing the woman from his thoughts. 'He's got into trouble again. He's broken his gate.'

'Dear me ! I'm very sorry. What will you do ?'

'He ought to be sent down. I don't like sending him down just at the end of the term, for his family's sake. He is not doing any good here. He has got into a bad set. That fellow Brackenbury 'll be the ruin of him.'

‘I’m very sorry it should happen just now,’ said the Junior Dean. He was thinking about Molly, and the unpleasant story he had to tell her. ‘Couldn’t anything else be done?’

‘I don’t think so. I don’t see how we could overlook it. He was not only out after twelve, but he got proctorized, and he didn’t come in by the college gate.’

‘Ah!’ said the Junior Dean; but he wasn’t thinking of Jack. ‘I—I don’t see how he could get in.’

‘Nor do I,’ said the tutor dryly; ‘but I *will* see. I don’t think I’ll send him down until I find out. I’ll give him another chance.’

END OF VOL. II.





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